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COURSE

OF

Lectures

FOR

SUNDAY EVENINGS:

CONTAINING

RELIGIOUS ADVICE

TO

YOUNG PERSONS.

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IN TWO VOLUMES.

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VOL. I.

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NEW-YORK,

PUBLISHED BY D. A. BOGGRAD.

1829.

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A COURSE

OF

Lectures

FOR

SUNDAY EVENINGS;

CONTAINING

RELIGIOUS ADVICE

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YOUNG PERSONS.

[Sarah Slinn]

IN TWO VOLUMES.

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1829.



W. E. DEAN, PRINTER.

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## DEDICATION.

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To ..... ..

MY DEAR YOUNG FRIENDS,

As I have a very high opinion of the goodness of your hearts, and am deeply interested in your future happiness, I shall take the liberty of dedicating to you a Work, of which your conduct and your request were the original occasion.

I have, throughout the whole, addressed myself in the *singular* number, though without any intention of excluding *any* of you from an equal share in my regard, but merely, that *each* may take it as friendly expostulation and private advice.

Religion is the highest concern of every

individual ; and therefore is not distinguished (as are many of your accomplishments) by being peculiar to either *sex*, or to difference of situation. You *all* are *alike* obliged to pay obedience to the laws of God, to the duties of social life, and to the regulation of your tempers and manners ; for which reason, every thing that can promote these important designs, should engage your attention and regard.

The concerns of this life are of no further avail, than as they contribute to form your soul for the enjoyment of a future state. This is but a transitory situation : a *very few* years may finish your existence upon earth, and then its joys or its sorrows will be past and forgotten. But the remembrance of your *actions*, the pleasure of your good, or the remorse of your evil deeds, will *never* be effaced. Your happiness or misery throughout all *eternity* depends upon the improvement which you *now* make of the advantages you enjoy.

Recollect *this* when you are likely to be seduced by temptation : and may the Almighty Governor of the world take you into his protection, guard you from the evil examples of life, and conduct you in the paths of virtue to a happy immortality hereafter.

May his blessing attend on the instructions which you will find in the following pages, and dispose your hearts to improve by the truths which they contain.

So will this proof of my friendship be a lasting advantage, and evince to you with what sincerity I subscribe myself

Your affectionate

S\*\*\*\* S\*\*\*\*



## INTRODUCTION.

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I WENT, a few months ago, to pass some time with an intimate friend, who has several children, and whose custom it usually is to read to his family on a Sunday evening. But I was rather surprised to find, that the younger part of his auditors appeared to be entirely inattentive to the serious truths which were contained in a very rational and well-written discourse.

The eldest daughter sat for some time listening with great earnestness; but, by degrees, her eyes grew heavy, her head inclined alternately on either side, till she fell into a profound sleep, interrupted only by involuntary starts when in danger of falling. Her sister, though more *wakeful*, was not better engaged, as she employed herself in counting the spots on her pocket-handkerchief, and afterwards in tying it into various forms; which, by attracting the observation of her brothers, seemed to engage them much more than any thing they might have heard from their father.

I took the liberty, therefore, the next morning, to remonstrate with them on the impropriety of such behaviour; and received for answer, that, they could not, when they had taken the utmost pains to understand what their father had been reading, at all com-

prehend it; and therefore, if they did not in some manner amuse themselves, it would be impossible to keep awake, as such a long and silent confinement so much disposed them to be drowsy, that they could not refrain from sleep; but that if the subjects were suited to the level of their capacities, they should very *willingly* attend; and concluded with a fervent wish, that they had more religious books which they could comprehend.

This reply, I must acknowledge, appeared to me to be founded in nature and truth: for how can the mind be expected to attend to those instructions which are beyond its power to conceive? and how can our conduct be influenced by those arguments, whose force we are destitute of abilities to discern?

The subject which my friend was engaged to reading, on the evening to which I have above alluded, was, *The folly and mischief of religious zeal, when not guided by the spirit of charity, and directed in its exertions by the rules of prudence*; and though it was handled in a masterly and, convincing manner, the style was far superior to the weak and puerile ideas of children.

In the hope, therefore, of engaging their reflections on the duties of life, by suiting the arguments to their present circumstances and comprehensions, I have engaged in the following work; and sincerely wish it may answer the purpose for which it was written.

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# FAMILY LECTURES

FOR

*SUNDAY EVENINGS.*

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## SUNDAY I.

ON A HABIT OF ATTENTION.

THOUGH there are many, things, my dear, of which at present you are ignorant, yet you well know, that knowledge is only to be acquired by a desire to be informed ; and if you do not endeavour to *listen* to those instructions which you receive either at church or at home, you certainly must lose the benefit of improvement, and will still continue in a state of ignorance.

Though at present you are incapable of understanding *every* thing that you may hear, yet this ability is not to be acquired by neglect ; while you spend your time in play, and employ your thoughts on toys and trifles, such parts of a discourse as might be suited to your capacity, and calculated to

enlighten your mind, will be passed over with equal negligence as the rest.

Young as you are, you have been instructed that there is a God who observes all your actions ; you have been taught your duty to him, as your Creator and Preserver : you know likewise what are your obligations to your fellow-creatures, and that a regard to a right conduct, and the practice of virtue, is a duty that you owe to *yourself*. It is a *part*, therefore, of the performance of those duties, to do all in your power to improve in knowledge ; to learn every day more and more in what those obligations consist, what are the sins you should particularly endeavour to avoid, and the virtues you are most called upon to practise. As you advance in years, your opportunities of usefulness will be increased ; but even at *present* you have *some* things incumbent upon you to observe ; and the Almighty will be as watchful over your conduct, as over those who are your superiors in age.

Every state, my dear, has its particular duties to fulfil. To acquire a clear idea of what God expects from you at *this* period of your life, is what I now mean particularly to

recommend ; and to this end, you must listen with a design of improving by the advice of your older friends. You must not allow yourself to be impatient when they reprove, or negligent when they would instruct you : nor must you, on any account, if you design to render your behaviour pleasing to the Deity, *forget* the serious admonitions you receive ; since, in that case, you will resemble those hearers whom our Saviour describes in one of his parables, as receiving the word into stony ground, or into a barren soil, where, for want of earth, the seed which was sown withered away. The meaning of which is, that what you may learn from reading, or your friends may be so kind as to teach you, will be of no use, unless you resolve to act as you are desired. A determined *obedience* to those instructions is, therefore, evidently your present duty ; since, though you may have sufficient sense to comprehend what you are taught, it will never “ spring up,” or bring the fruits of virtue to perfection, unless it be sown in *good ground*,—unless you reflect so seriously on the consequence of your actions, as to resolve to observe the precepts of religion,

and regulate your life by the directions of truth.

What is above your comprehension, entreat your parents to explain; and if you *endeavour* to discover the sense of any author you may read, or any discourse you attend to, you will find that your abilities will be improved; and what might appear difficult to you upon a slight perusal, or a transient thought, will be more clearly understood upon mature reflection, and a serious and frequent consideration of the subject. —But as your mind is at present too volatile to expect a continued attention, I shall conclude my present exhortation, with the hope, that as the contents of this little work are such as are highly interesting, and of the utmost importance, you will favour them with a candid and an *attentive* perusal.

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## SUNDAY II.

### ON TRUTH.

THE necessity of establishing a character for veracity is so obvious, that I shall

perhaps rather offend you, by supposing there is any need to recommend it. But as young persons in particular are sometimes drawn into error by surprise, I would warn you, my dear, to be upon your guard ; as *one* deviation will be attended with lasting consequences of evil.

The fear of present shame is, in general, a strong incentive to deceit ; and to hide the neglect of a duty, or excuse the commission of an error, the aggravated guilt of a *lie* is added to the transgression. When an untruth is detected (as one time or other it will be), the character of sincerity is always suspected. In vain may you promise amendment, or assure your friends of your repentance ; the bond of reliance is broken ; for who can give credit to the word of a *liar* ? Those who have *once* deceived us, we are apt in future to treat with contempt. All confidence in them is abolished, till, by a *long* and *steady* adherence to *truth*, they have retrieved their lost honour, and engaged us to renew our dependance upon them.

Every deviation from a known duty is dangerous, and to admit the *appearance* of evil is to verge towards the commission of a

crime. Temptations to deny the truth may every day occur: and unless you resolutely determine to abide any inconvenience rather than forfeit your veracity, you will certainly be ensnared into the commission of this dangerous sin. In the fifth chapter of the second Book of Kings, a striking history is recorded of the lie which *Gehazi*, the servant of the prophet *Elisha*, told his master, concerning the gifts which he had received from *Naaman*, a noble *Syrian*, who had come to *Samaria*, to be healed by him of the leprosy, a sore and disagreeable disorder, with which he had been long afflicted. This nobleman had been informed by a little maid, whom the *Syrians* had taken captive in their wars with the children of *Israel*, that there was in her country a prophet, whom God had endued with power to heal diseases: to him she advised her master to apply for relief. The noble *Naaman* determined to try the experiment; and, with a train of followers befitting his rank, and a recommendation from the king, his master, set forward to make the attempt. When he arrived at *Samaria*, he went immediately to the monarch of *Israel*, to whom his letter

was addressed, and implored his assistance for his recovery. *Jehoram*, who reigned at that time, was exceedingly disturbed at the message, and imagined that the King of *Assyria*, with whom he was frequently at war, sought, by a request which it was out of his power to comply with, to make a pretence of quarrel; and accordingly rent his clothes, as a mark of his sorrow on the occasion.

*Elisha*, as soon as this action was told him, sent to *Jehoram*, with an inquiry to know why he had been so hasty and discontented? and to desire that *Naaman* might be sent to him, and he should *know* that there was a prophet in *Israel*, who, by the assistance of God, could effect the difficult cure, which *Benhadad* had entreated the king to accomplish. In consequence of this message, *Naaman* was dismissed to *Elisha*, who sent him word by his servant, to go and wash seven times in *Jordan* (one of the rivers of *Samaria*), and he should be perfectly healed. The *Syrian* nobleman, who thought his rank, and the splendour of his equipage, claimed a greater degree of respect, was offended that the prophet did



not invite him into his house, put his hand on the place, and command a cure ; and very foolishly argued, that the remedy prescribed was so *simple* that he imagined no benefit would arise from obeying it ; that *Abana* and *Pharpar*, rivers of *Damascus* (his own city), were larger and better than all the waters of *Israel*, and therefore he might as well wash in them and be clean ; and, with this angry and dissatisfied disposition, would have left the city, without trying the effect of the prophet's advice. But his attendants, with more reason, represented to him, that as he had taken the journey in expectation of relief, he had better *try* the efficacy, of the waters which were recommended ; and that, if he had been ordered some great and expensive mean, difficult to procure, and displeasing in the application, he would, without hesitation, have joyfully complied ; and it was certainly much more easy, when he was only told to wash and be clean. Convinced by these just and judicious arguments, he submitted to the method proposed, and, to his astonishment and satisfaction, found himself immediately restored to health.

With the warmest sentiments of gratitude, he then returns to the prophet, acknowledges himself a convert to the belief of the true God, and offers some rich presents, as a return to *Elisha* for the obligation which by his means he had received. These, however, were generously refused; and *Naaman*, after pressing his acceptance of his gift, set forward, with a thankful heart, on his return.

But *Gehazi*, who waited on the prophet, whose avarice repined at the benevolence of his master, determined that the *Syrian* should not so easily escape. He ran after the carriage, therefore, and being perceived by the grateful nobleman, he immediately stopped to receive his message, with an affectionate inquiry whether his master was well? *Gehazi*, with a ready falsehood, replied, that no accident had happened, but that two young men, the sons of the prophet, having unexpectedly arrived from mount *Ephraim*, his master had sent him, to beg for them a talent of silver, and two changes of raiment. This *Naaman* readily complies with, and desires his acceptance of two talents of silver, which were bound

in two bags with the garments, and carried by his servant before the treacherous *Gehazi*, who bestowed (that is, hid) them in the house, and then returned to wait upon *Elisha*. The prophet, who was conscious of the iniquity of his servant, inquired where he had been ? To which, with the most audacious appearance of innocence, he answered, " Thy servant went no whither." Shocked at the wickedness of his denial, the prophet at once confounds and punishes his guilt by this answer : " Went not my heart with thee, when the man turned again from his chariot to meet thee ? Is it a time to receive money, and to receive garments and possessions ? Therefore the leprosy of *Naaman* shall cleave unto thee and to thy seed for ever." " And he went out from his presence," adds the historian, " a leper, as white as snow."

This story is an example, among many, of one fault being the occasion of another ; and should teach you at all times to avoid doing a wrong action, since there is no certainty where the guilt or evil may stop. When *Gehazi* first formed the covetous plan of wishing for some of the gifts which

his master had rejected, he could find no way to accomplish his desire, but by the invention of a lie ; and when, by the undeserved confidence of the *Syrian* lord, he had procured the riches which he solicited, the temptation became still greater to conceal it from his master, by a second falsehood.

But remember, my good young friend, whatever may be your inclination to deceive, or however necessary it may appear for your interest to disguise the truth, that although there is no *prophet* to discover your guilt, yet the same God, who endued *Elisha* with that power, is ever present, to observe and to punish your wickedness. Think, therefore, with yourself, when you are incited to deviate from the truth, that although you may escape detection from your friends, or those with whom you are connected, yet the awful question may be applied to you, "Went not mine heart with thee, when the man turned again from his chariot?" That is, that however secret the lie may appear to be, however unsuspected you may at present escape, yet God, who is all times the witness of every

action, and is acquainted with every thought, will certainly, unless you sincerely repent, punish your crimes hereafter.

Before the coming of *Christ*, God acted as the peculiar Governor of the Jewish nation ; and as a future state was not then so clearly revealed, their laws were suited to the nature of their situation at that time. Hence you will find, that temporal punishments were assigned, and temporal rewards proposed, to engage their obedience : such as, that God would bless them and their posterity with health and long life, with a fruitful land, with peace and plenty, if they behaved according to his commands ; but if they acted wickedly, then he would destroy them, would give them to their enemies for slaves, would make them miserable through ill health, and send the horrors of famine upon them, so that they should have nothing to eat. And therefore, the punishment of *Gehazi*, in the present instance, is, that he and his children, if ever he had any, should suffer with the sore and shocking disorder of a leprosy ; as a warning to others, not to be guilty of the like crimes. And the reason that this seemingly severe

chastisement was to be continued to his children,, might be, that when, in after times, people inquired *why* this disorder afflicted all the race of *Gehazi* ? they might be informed that one of their progenitors had offended God, by the wickedness of lying ; and hence be taught the importance of an adherence to truth, and how unpleasant a contrary conduct is to the Divine Governor of the world.

As every example and every precept in the Scriptures is written for your instruction, you should seriously consider, that if God so severely punished *Gehazi*, who had never had the blessing of that pure revelation which *Christ* came into the world to make known, you must not expect that he will be less displeased with you, although he may not think proper to punish you immediately. Nor is this sin confined to such instances as seem to be important in themselves : the crime may be aggravated indeed by circumstances ; but if it be occasioned by an accident the most trifling, still, as an untruth, it is extremely wicked, and the commission will undoubtedly meet its deserved condemnation.

Will you, therefore, ever be persuaded to lose the approbation of your friends, the satisfaction of an approving conscience, and, above all, do a deed which will displease the Almighty, to save yourself from a present inconvenience, or to acquire a present benefit? If you reflect seriously upon the subject, can any thing be worth such a sacrifice? Will any gratification recompense you for the miserable consciousness of having swerved from your duty in this instance, for the dread of detection, the fear of shame, and, if discovered, the certain loss of your honour and reputation? Could you bear to have your fidelity liable to suspicion, and not to obtain the credit of belief in other affairs, where you might be more sincere? Recollect these arguments, then, when you are tempted to transgress; and beg of God to fortify your mind with strength to resist temptation.

Be assured, that if you have committed an error, the most noble reparation will be to acknowledge it. No one is absolutely perfect; but it is despicable and mean to deny a fault, and hide a failing, at the expense of truth. The motive, if it be to

save your reputation, is highly erroneous ; since honesty, upon all occasions, is the only true foundation of lasting respect. Other offences may meet with more compassion and excuse ; but a *liar* will always be branded with infamy, and his character meet with detestation and contempt.

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### SUNDAY III.

#### ON READING THE SCRIPTURES.

If you read the Bible without attention, think it a hardship, and regard it as a task, you will find no delight, nor gain any improvement from the study of it. Consider that it is the book which you should constantly pursue to teach you your duty to God, and to instruct you in what he has commanded, and what forbidden, to be done.

The same laws which he enjoined to the *Jews*, he requires *now* of *Christians*, except those which were of a ceremonious sort ; such as their sacrifices, their going up to *Jerusalem*, and others of the like kind, which



your parents will teach you to distinguish. But the Ten Commandments remain in the same force ; and God will be as much displeased with those who disobey them *now*, as when they were first given to *Moses*, at *Mount Sinai*. When, therefore, you take the name of God in vain, either by swearing, or by what is too commonly practised by those who esteem themselves thoughtful and religious, by repeating the words *Lord*, *God*, or *Christ*, and calling upon their Maker, as an exclamation which they use without reflection, upon every trifling occasion ; this is to break the third commandment. Nor is an ill-tempered sullenness, or insolent rudeness to your parents, when they kindly offer you their advice, or endeavour to instruct you, less a breach of the fifth.

To take what is not your own, or to pilfer from your companions any thing which belongs to them, because it suits your inclination, will certainly come under the guilt of *stealing*. For wickedness is as much deserving of condemnation, if exercised in circumstances which are indifferent in themselves, as when excited by more powerful temptations ; since it is the *intention* of the

*mind* which constitutes the *guilt* of an action; and if you take a toy or a trinket, *knowing* it to belong to another, you are certainly guilty of a breach of that commandment which ordains, "Thou shalt not steal."

To desire the possessions of your neighbours in an undue degree,—to wish for their clothes, their\* money, or any thing which they possess, so as to be dissatisfied with your own, is a violation of that law which forbids you to covet; and so of the rest, which are not less binding for having been long delivered, but will ever remain of eternal force and obligation.

That God who was the ruler and governor of the *Israelites*, though he does not now visibly lead his people by the fiery pillar which gave light to them, but was a cloud of darkness to their enemies, is still the *same* God; equally watchful over the *Christians*; observes their obedience with approbation, and is present to every secret thought of the most youthful of his children. He beholds every struggle between duty and inclination and will reward them for every sacrifice which they make to virtue.

When they are excited by the examples which were recorded for their instruction, to do well, and to imitate what is right ; they may be certain, though observed by no earthly eye, "that they shall in no wise lose their reward ; for their Father who seeth in secret, himself will reward them openly."

When, therefore, you are permitted to read the Scriptures, endeavour to attend seriously to them ; and what you do not understand, desire some of your older friends to explain. Remember what they tell you, and think of it when you meet with the same passages again. This will make you find greater pleasure in the employment ; for it is tiresome to peruse any thing which we do not comprehend.

But, perhaps, you will be apt to imagine that the commands of the Almighty are not designed to affect *you* : that your *youth* will excuse you from obeying them ; and therefore, that it is of little consequence to take such a degree of trouble. In this opinion you will be much mistaken. It is necessary to *know* your duty before you can *practise* it ; and if you take no pains to in-

*quire* what God expects from you, I am afraid you will take still less to *do* what he commands.

*Samuel*, though but a child, was favoured by the Lord with a revelation of what was to befall the family of *Eli* ; for it is the *goodness* of the *heart* that will be regarded by God, and not the *age* of those who pray to him. He hath enjoined you to seek him early, in the days of your youth, and therefore you need never be discouraged with the idea that, as a *child*, you are but of little consequence ; for God watcheth over the thoughts of every infant mind, and is well pleased when he beholds the earnest endeavours of the *least* of his creatures to be *good*, and to deserve his favour.

You are not to expect that your piety will make you distinguished in the same manner as *Samuel*, because he was designed to be a prophet ; and no one, since the death of *Christ* and his apostles, have *that* gift bestowed upon them ; but this instance may convince you, that the favour of God, and his observance of human actions, is not confined to any particular ages, but that all are

equally the care of his providence, and share alike in his notice.

If, then, you endeavour to learn your duty, and are resolved to practise it, young as you are, you may be capable of doing *much* good in the world. Your acquaintance will be incited, from your example, to imitate what they will find every one ready to commend. Your parents will be made happy by the pleasure of seeing you such as they wish you to become, and will be thankful to God for the blessing of such a good child: they will be always ready to trust your promises, because they know, that when *they* are absent, you will consider yourself as in *God's* presence; and therefore will not do any thing that is wrong, while you remember that he is the awful witness of your actions. And shall you not rejoice, my dear, to gain the confidence of those friends whom you love, and who are so kind and so attentive to you?

I am sure this consideration will have weight with every worthy mind: and a good child must rejoice to see the delight of an affectionate father, when he surveys with

pleasure the improvements of his beloved offspring; or the raptures of a tender mother, when she perceives any new instance of virtue in the object of her fondest regard.

The *happiness* of parents, my young friend, is so connected with the *goodness* of their children, that if they are undutiful, negligent, and wicked, it must give such affliction and trouble, as no other comforts can counterbalance. Can you bear the thought of making *them* unhappy, whose whole aim in life is to promote *your* felicity? Can you receive with sullenness and ill-humour that advice which is designed entirely for your good? Recollect how anxiously they endeavour to provide for all your wants; to their kindness you are indebted for your food, your clothing, and every convenience which you enjoy. And though this care and attention is *their* duty; to respect, to love, to reverence, and obey them, is no less *yours*, and what God will as undoubtedly expect from you.

To be obedient to your parents, is one of the first obligations which you can perform in life, and is the only return in your power to make for those continual favours which you

daily {receive : “ Honour, then, thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long in the land, which the Lord thy God giveth thee.”

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## SUNDAY IV.

### ON SOCIAL DUTY.

WHEN God made the world, his wisdom gave to mankind a power of speech, reason, and reflection, which he bestowed on no other creature ; and, as human nature is subject to many wants, and is too weak *singly* to provide for itself, the Almighty has ordained that we should live together ; and that numbers, by helping each other, should procure those conveniences which no man *alone* could obtain.

This union, my dear, is called a state of society ; and every child who is born is termed a member, or one of that society ; that is, another addition to the number of people in the world ; and every one has some duties to perform, which are known by the name of *social duties* ; because, if it were

possible for you to live quite alone, those duties would not be exacted. For, had you not parents, you could not obey them : had you not brothers or sisters, you could not love them ; had you not friends or instructors, you could not be thankful and attentive to them ; and if you knew no persons who were poor and wretched, you could not be kind and charitable.

While you are young, it becomes you to be dutiful to your superiors ; and whatever is the station in which Providence has thought fit to place you, to endeavour by every kind attention in your power, to promote the happiness of those connected with you. Each instance, therefore, of sullenness when you are reprov'd, of anger when disappointed, and petulance and ill-humour when you meet with contradiction, is a certain failure in your duty as a social being. Whenever you are tempted to offend in this respect, recollect that your conduct is noticed by a higher power than those who gave you offence ; that most probably the advice which you disapprove, is entirely designed to promote your welfare ; that though such admonitions may be wounding to your pride,



the sure mark of a noble mind is to improve by every hint which is afforded to guide it through life ; and be assured, the time *will come* when experience will alter your present opinions, and convince you of those errors of which you now refuse to be corrected.

But even admitting that your *friends* should be to blame, allowing that they should treat you with severity, or mistake your motive, and blame you with ill-nature ; in such a case you must console yourself with the reflection, that however *others* may provoke you, *you* will be calm, and govern your temper ; and that such a conduct will insure to you the approbation of that God, whom no outward appearance can deceive, and no weakness mislead ; but that his goodness will recompense every attempt which is made, and assist every endeavour to excel in virtue. From the faults of others, you should endeavour to correct your own ; and while you suffer unmerited ill-humour, remember the same bad qualities will produce equal abhorrence in yourself.

Every individual, be his rank in life ever so obscure, can at the most early age contribute, by his good behaviour, to the feli-

city of those about him ; and to ease the burthen of care, and give assistance to each other, is to promote that wise and benevolent design which our Maker designed in the creation of man.

As this is a state of trial, you will meet with no character without imperfection ; and therefore, when you discover any failings in those who have the care of your education, you are not to retort with insolence upon them, and say, “ they require those virtues from you, which they themselves fail to practise ;” for though undoubtedly, in every instance, the teacher ought to set an example of excellence to the pupil, yet such is human weakness, that those whose better knowledge calls for superior virtue, those whom we may expect to act nobly upon every occasion, will sometimes unhappily disappoint our expectations, and behave in such a manner as to forfeit, in that instance, the esteem of their friends, and incur their own reproach.

But in such a situation, if you are convinced that those whom you are bound to obey, have not kept in mind the precepts which they have taught you, remember,

that perhaps there may be *many* reasons to plead in their excuse. That it may be, when young, they were not blessed with those high advantages of instruction and improvement which you enjoy ; or that, if they were so favoured, they might *then* disregard what they *now* find to their cost they have reason to lament their neglect of.

Make use, therefore, of *their* experience to act more wisely ; but never regard it as any excuse for errors in yourself, much less that it gives you a right to be saucy and irreverent in your behaviour. What, upon serious reflection, they advise you to observe, however you may fancy they deviate from it themselves, you may be certain it is for your good ; and you should consider that, as they are older, and do not, it is most probable, tell you all the motives for their actions ; so those instances, which to you may appear blameable, would, perhaps, were it proper to acquaint you with the reasons of their conduct, fully clear them from your censure.

## SUNDAY V.

## ON BROTHERLY LOVE.

THE near connexion which subsists between children of the same family, should incite them to mutual kindness ; and yet it is too often observed in life, that those who are most nearly united by interest and duty, are the least engaged by friendship and affection. The most trifling circumstances often produce events of high importance ; and if you would perform your social duties aright, if you mean to act up to the high character of a *Christian*, you must remember, that it is necessary to keep a constant guard over your temper, and to be strictly attentive to every occurrence of domestic life. If your relations are kind and obliging, it will be highly ungrateful to impose upon their goodness, or take any unfair advantage of their tenderness. For surely nothing can be more ungenerous, than to behave ill to those who are *meek*, because you know they will not *resent* it.

Let not those who, through tenderness, bear with your faults, have, for *that reason*

the more faults to bear with. That is a mean disposition, which will only be governed by fear or by resentment. A noble mind will endeavour to promote the happiness of all around it ; and why should you suffer the captiousness of ill-humour to destroy your own serenity, and disturb the peace of your nearest and best friends ? If God has done so much to promote the good of mankind, surely he will punish those who oppose his benevolent design by their perverse dispositions.

“ Let brotherly love, then, continue undisturbed ;” and never do or say any thing with a design of giving pain to those with whom you are. A *word*, or a *look* of unkindness, may cause much uneasiness to a brother or sister ; remember, therefore, the charitable rule by which our Saviour enjoins *his* disciples to proceed, and *do to them* as you, in the like situation, would wish they should act by you.

In this life numberless troubles will unavoidably arise ; but he who is willing to take offence at trifles, or inconsiderately give pain to others, will add greatly to the burthen of sorrow, and must expect to

suffer the miseries which his conduct deserves.

How severely did the envious and unkind brethren of the innocent *Joseph* lament their barbarous behaviour? And though God may not at the present moment appear to inflict his vengeance on those who are petulant and ill-tempered; yet, be assured, that he *notices* every *passionate expression*: that he sees every act of malignity and spite; and that the *envious*, the *sullen*, the *morose* child, will not escape unpunished. He alone can be happy in this world, he alone will be blessed in a future state, who endeavours to be *good-tempered*. "Blessed are the *merciful*, for they shall obtain *mercy*. Blessed are the *peace-makers*, for they shall be called the children of God." Like their Almighty Father, they delight to promote happiness around them; and in their narrow sphere, in the small circle of their own family, among their brothers and sisters, their relations or acquaintance, to diffuse and excite a spirit of kindness and affection.

The sweet influence, my young reader, be assured, will spread from heart to heart: others will catch a habit of compliance from

you ; and your example will rouse them to a sense of emulation, and to a generous desire not to be outdone in good-nature. Let then your contest be, *not* who shall *overcome* in a dispute, but who shall first *yield* to the other, and set the first example of self-denial.

From the moment of your rising till you lie down again to repose, you will constantly meet with some opportunity to show your good-humour, or exercise your peevish and vexatious talents. As I have before told you, as the Scriptures continually remind you, *every* action is observed by God ; for every *word* we must, at the day of judgment, give account : remember, therefore, how important an object it is, to be kind, complying, obliging, civil ; not when others are cross or peevish, “ rendering them railing (that is, ill-tempered language) for railing, nor evil for evil, but contrariwise blessing ; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing.” Which is intended to instruct you, that as you are called to the blessings of the *Christian* covenant, so you should act worthy of that profession ; and though such behaviour as railing, or doing evil, may be,

in some measure, excusable in those who are ignorant and uninstructed, yet that *Christians* who have read the Gospel, and been taught by the precepts and example of *Christ*, can plead no excuse for their bad behaviour ; that it is a part of their engagement “ to love one another : ” without observing which, they cannot hope for the privileges or blessing of the new, or *Christian* covenant : “ for hereby,” says our Saviour, “ shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if you have love one toward another ; ” and though this was intended in a more extensive sense, to take in every one we either *know* or *hear* of, yet surely it is in a peculiar manner needful towards those with whom we *live* ; and, therefore, whose happiness is so much more nearly concerned in our good or bad behaviour.

Take care, then, my young friend, how you suffer yourself to be fretful and discontented ; and because you have the *power* to be *ill-natured*, because you can tease others with impunity, therefore think you have a *right* so to do. Be assured, that every act, however trifling, which is designed to provoke you companions, will be the cause of



great unhappiness to yourself. While, on the contrary, every exertion of kindness, civility, and good-humour, will afford you such inward satisfaction, in the approbation of an approving conscience, as will be found one of the highest enjoyments which this world can bestow.

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## SUNDAY VI.

### ON ENVY.

THERE is nothing more opposite to brotherly love than the indulgence of a disposition to envy. Where this evil passion once takes possession of the mind, it destroys the benevolent influence of good-nature, and renders those who indulge it a torment to others, and a misery to themselves.

Envy arises from a consciousness of wanting either that genius, or those talents, which are the possession of another. Instead of exciting us to imitate what we think is agreeable, it inclines us to depreciate or undervalue their goodness or ac-

complishments. But beware, my young reader, how you give the least indulgence to this hateful disposition ; examine your own heart impartially, lest it should steal upon you undiscovered.

When you hear any of your relations or companions praised for their improvements, if you feel a dislike to the subject, are unwilling to join in their commendation, be assured, that it proceeds from *envy*: or, if you try to discover their failings, with a view to mention them the next time you hear them admired ; if you find a desire to say, "To be sure, they are *good* in *this* instance ; but in *that* they are *worse* than myself: in *some* particulars they excel, but in *others* they are very defective ;" if this be what you are inclined to say or to think, recollect that these are the suggestions of *envy*: such feelings are the beginning of temptation: and resolve to be more generous for the future. Remember, that if the merit of others gives you pain, it is because you are inferior to them ; and instead of being *displeased* at their goodness, resolve to become *like* them.

If, for instance, your companion be com-

intended for *sweetness* of temper, reflect that it is in your own power to become equally *amiable*. Determine, the next time you are vexed, provoked, or disappointed, to bear it with patience and good-humour. Endeavour to *deserve* equal praise, and you will most probably meet with it. But suppose, from a difference in circumstances or situation, *that* should not happen to be the case, still will you have a higher consolation to reward you. God Almighty, the great Father and watchful observer of all his creatures, will be pleased with your endeavours to do your duty; and his favour will be a better recompence than any other advantage you could obtain. You will likewise secure your own happiness, by avoiding that train of disagreeable reflection which ever attends on an envious disposition.

Those whom we *envy* we cannot *love*; we rejoice at any accident which interrupts their prosperity; and it gives us pleasure to see them guilty of such failings as may disgrace their good qualities. What a shocking, what a miserable temper! yet such is its real representation.

To perceive the hateful appearance of vice, you must survey it in others ; and remember, what you think disgusting in *them*, will be equally wicked in *yourself*. *David* was conscious how blameable it was to take the poor man's lamb ; though without remorse he sent for the wife of *Uriah*, when he had caused her husband to be slain, by exposing him to the sword of the children of *Ammon*.

God is the witness of every *intention*. If you join in praising others, that you may have a better opportunity to expose their failings, he will punish your hypocrisy with severe vengeance. There is a meanness in *envy*, which checks the exertion of every noble affection. It is the vice of little minds, which grudges merit its deserved reward, and repines that any one is happy but itself. Endeavour to rise above its low suggestions ; remember that *others* being great, generous, or accomplished, does not argue that *you* may not have the same good qualities. Few persons excel in *every* thing : all may, if they please, in *something*. Cultivate your own talents with care ; but be

contented to let others have their share of applause.

If God has bestowed upon you any personal beauty, be thankful for the gift; but consider, it is a dangerous blessing: if it raises your vanity, the end is defeated for which it was lent you. The advantages of person are no further valuable, than as they render you more pleasing to others; but if they excite a spirit of contention, affectation, and pride, they will make you despicable in the eyes of persons of real sense, and prove a misfortune rather than a happiness. On the other hand, should it be your lot to be deformed, disfigured, or disagreeable, let it not raise your *envy* at the graces which others may possess; do not be uneasy on the subject, but consider that these are trifling distinctions; that to be *virtuous* and *amiable*, is the only thing of importance. God knows best what is proper for all his creatures; and if, therefore, he has seen it right to deny you the advantage of a comely person, be assured, that there are wise reasons why you should be contented, and not wish for any thing that is withheld from you.

Perhaps, had you been possessed of the beauty you so much desire, it would have made you vain and disagreeable ; would have engaged too much of your thoughts, your time, and your attention : vice only will make you really deformed.

If you are treated unkindly, or ridiculed by your companions, it reflects dishonour upon *them*, not discredit upon *you*. Where misfortunes of this kind are not owing to your own fault, never regard them as any disgrace. *Virtue*, not *beauty*, is what God will regard, and what the good will esteem. Be kind, therefore, to others : be good-tempered, and endeavour to do every thing to the best of your abilities ; but never envy what your companions possess.

As this life is only a state of trial, God has not thought fit to bestow his gifts to all in equal proportion. But whatever may be your lot, he expects that you should be contented, and not repine because *others* appear to have more advantages. Nay, he has thought fit to enjoin us to this virtue by an absolute command : "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house ; thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his servant,

nor his maid, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor *any* thing that is his."

It is wrong to wish for the goods of fortune, or to desire a change of situation ; since no one can tell the secret cares which another may experience ; and the very person whom you regard with the highest degree of envy, may be much more unhappy than yourself.

A fine house, an elegant equipage, fashionable clothes, and a beautiful person, do not any of them, or all together, bestow *happiness* ; and the poorest child, who is humble, gentle, willing to be taught, and does the best it can to perform its duty, will be found to enjoy pleasures which *riches* cannot give, and such as can only result from a *good heart*.

Be sincere, therefore, in your words, generous, open-hearted, kind to your equals, obedient to your superiors ; preserve a constant sense of God upon your mind, and act so as to merit his approbation : then will you be above the meanness of *envy* ; you will have no temptation to such a hateful passion, and you will obtain as much real felicity as can be enjoyed in this world.

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## SUNDAY VII.

## ON PRIDE.

THIS vice has been often said to be the fault of little minds. The meaning of which is, that people of real sense and merit esteem every thing according to its worth ; and therefore consider riches, beauty, or rank, as accidental advantages, which can reflect no honour on the possessor.

Every blessing which we enjoy is derived from Infinite Goodness ; they should always engage our *gratitude*, but never excite our *pride*. When we compare the situation, talents, or enjoyments of others with our own, the greater satisfaction we receive, the more ardent should be our thankfulness.

That we are superior to our neighbours, is no merit in *us*, but increases our obligation to that God who has so liberally endowed us with his gifts. Prosperity is by no means a state of security. Innumerable dangers attend on those whose circumstances are exalted ; they are too often in-



clined to forget their duty, to grow fond of pleasure, and to esteem dress, show, and ostentation, beyond the noblest virtues of the heart. But it is impossible to describe the meanness and guilt of such conduct.

Suppose yourself to be dressed by the hand of elegance, and that your person is so agreeably formed as to inspire pleasure in every beholder ; nay, allow that you have all those outward graces which the polish of refined manners, and a good education, can bestow ; still are not these advantages a just foundation for pride. Though you may excel your companions in dancing, in music, in painting, or in any, or all of those accomplishments in which it is praise-worthy to succeed ; yet a haughty consciousness of superiority, and a disdain of those who have been less fortunate, or less capable of exertion, will spoil the fair fruit of these *otherwise* delightful blossoms, and render you the object of abhorrence and contempt.

Virtue is the one thing needful. We may be careful and troubled about many things, but that is the essential part. Every perfection, every distinction, which has not

that for its support, will be of no avail when death shall mix your body with the common dust, and your soul shall return to the God who gave it.

Endeavour therefore now to anticipate, by reflection, that period which will certainly arrive. Recollect, when you display your finery to others, to excite their envy, or inspire their reverence, that true respect is the tribute paid to real merit alone ; and however you may raise the stare of astonishment, or cause the sigh of vexation, by this gratification of your pride ; yet it is only in the idea of the weak and unreflecting, that you will have even this poor kind of homage paid to your vanity.

If there is *one* who, like *Mordecai*, does not seem to observe your fancied superiority, you will suffer all the pangs of the ambitious *Haman*. Every comfort of life will be disregarded, and each former satisfaction afford no pleasure, while you consider this vexation, as "*Mordecai the Jew, sitting in the king's gate.*"

Pride is ever an enemy to instruction ; it will incline you to fancy your judgment better informed than your teachers ; and, in

consequence, render you angry and petulant at instruction, and quite impatient at reproof. "Surely *I* should know best," is the language of the proud upon every occasion. Thus do they exclude the possibility of improvement, and sit down obstinate in ignorance, and vain of error.

The vice of which we are now speaking is detestable at *every* age ; but is more particularly disgusting in *youth*, where the want of experience must add to the weakness of folly, and render presumption more glaring. Subdue, then, with the utmost vigilance, the first approaches of this dangerous vice ; it will increase in its strength by imperceptible degrees. Apply seriously to your Heavenly Father for assistance ; be resolute and watchful over this spiritual enemy.

When you find the emotions of resentment arise on being told of your fault ; when you are angry with the reproving friend ; and still more, when you determine not to heed the kind reprehension ; then, my young friend, it is time to tremble for your virtue. Do not encourage the wrong inclination. Do not say, then, censure is unjust ; nor seek to vindicate your error with any

plausible pretext. Excuses may deceive others ; and, what is worse, may deceive yourself. But, my dear child, God is greater than our hearts, and knoweth all things. Examine yourself seriously ; perhaps you have been to blame ; do not be too hasty in your decision ; self-love is a terrible deceiver. Your parents are better judges of your conduct ; they hear with less prejudiced ears ; they see with more impartial eyes, and yet feel that anxiety for your character, which will incline them to make every proper allowance, when they think it necessary to censure your conduct.

A noble mind is never above the acknowledgment of a fault ; candidly own that you have erred, and resolve upon future amendment. This, in every case, is the best possible satisfaction ; the path of humility will conduct you to perfection ; the obstinacy of pride must render you unworthy of esteem. Its intention is self-defeated ; it seeks respect, but involves itself in disgrace. Pride aims at superiority, and claims commendation as its due ; but it is subject to continual disappointment, as every one will de-

light to mortify those who have too high an opinion of their own consequence.

Remember at all times, "that human excellence is but comparative," and that however exalted you may fancy your rank, your fortune, or your acquirements, there are others, though unknown, or unacknowledged by your vanity, "who excel you as much as you fancy you excel the meanest."

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## SUNDAY VIII.

### ON DECEIT.

MANY a person, whose conscience would be shocked by absolutely denying the *truth*, and affirming what they knew to be a *lie*, will yet allow in themselves a habit of deceit, without remorse or uneasiness.

Every crime is undoubtedly capable of aggravation, and the offender may be rendered more or less guilty from the attending circumstances. If falsehood is employed to injure a neighbour's reputation, to engage a companion to the commission of evil, or

to deprive another of his just right, it is rendered still more inexcusable. But do not be deceived by appearances : *deceit* is *forbidden* ; and though the motive which inspires it may be generous, there is no intention that can sanctify a *crime*.

*Ananias* and *Sapphira* were struck dead, yet they told a *part* of what was the truth : they had sold the land for a greater price than they were willing to acknowledge to the apostles ; and there are minds who would scarcely have felt the reproaches of conscience upon such an occasion. Too many young people do not scruple, where their interest or pleasure is concerned, to hide some circumstances of the truth, while they reveal others ; and by this means think they are exculpated from the charge of lying. But the awful example above mentioned was recorded for our instruction, and intended to convey to us a lesson of high importance—That the Almighty, who is a God of *truth*, and who must know our smallest deviations, will not acquit the guilty ; and that however the liar may be spared for the present, yet there is a *future* day of retribution, when, at the last and final

judgment, every transgression shall meet with its deserved punishment.

To speak on any subject with a design to mislead your hearer, to reveal so much of the *truth* as is requisite to *deceive*, and to be silent about every circumstance which would give a just information, is in effect, though you may not utter a word of falsehood, a premeditated lie in *act*. It must require thought, contrivance, and care ; and surely, where these are necessary to conceal your design, you as much intend to cheat the person you apply to, as if you affirmed what you knew was an untruth.

Is not this, my young friend, to pervert the powers of language ? Can you *believe* a person who has once deceived you ? Can you rely on his word who has broken his promise, or who, by some mean subterfuge, some artful evasion, has taken advantage of your greater honesty and candour ?

The path of truth is always open, unembarrassed, and safe : the ways of falsehood are intricate, difficult, and perplexed. The deceiver is ever unprepared with a reply to the most simple question ; he must guard against every possible demand, is always

subject to the shame of discovery, and to the hesitation of conscious disguise. The noble-minded, on the contrary, who have no mean secret to conceal, who are unapprehensive of reproach, and unintimidated with the fear of detection, may speak with all the freedom of truth, and are entitled to unbounded confidence. They have no occasion for a multitude of promises, or for solemn asseverations. Their simple word is sufficient to obtain credit, and they are trusted without the shadow of a doubt.

There is another species of this crime, which is practised without any further intention than that of raising astonishment. In reciting a story, such persons allow themselves to exaggerate the truth, and make their histories pleasing by the addition of circumstances which never happened. Such tales of fiction may amuse for a while, and occasion that degree of *wonder* which they are designed to excite ; but *time* will soon discover their falsehood ; and the relater of them must from that period lose the credit of belief. In vain may he become afterward more circumspect ; it will be long before he can re-establish his reputation. However



he may on some occasions be really sincere, his conversation will be attended to without confidence ; and what he affirms, be received with doubt and mistrust.

Such will be the evil consequences of deceit, where it is the most innocent ; and surely it would pain a generous mind to be the object of suspicion but for a moment. What can indicate greater meanness, or be more contemptible, than a character on which we have no reliance ? Or what can convey a more despicable idea, than to hear it said, " He *told* me so, but I do not believe him ?" Were there no motives of religious duty, even policy would dispose a person to be sincere, since nothing generous, amiable, or great, is ever expected from him who is known to *deceive*. Every duty of life must be interrupted, where *doubt* is suffered to prevail ; the professions of friendship may be suspected, where truth does not actuate the heart.

What respect can be given to that advice which we are not certain is offered with sincerity ? But the person *assures* us of his veracity : it may be so, yet the assurance of those who sometimes deceive is no proof.

How then can they offer stronger conviction? It is out of their power: where their *word* is suspected, there is no sure bond of reliance.

The Scriptures call the Devil "the Father of lies," and assure us, "that all liars shall have their portion in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone." Which is designed to express to us, that they will certainly be partakers of that future severe punishment which is prepared for the wicked in another life.

Fear, vanity, and pride, are the chief causes of deceit. To avert an unexpected evil, you may be tempted to the denial of truth, or to a mean equivocation, which is much the same in effect; but in the practice of *virtue*, our way is certain. Be determined always to do what is *right*, and expect the event without apprehension. Difficulties may arise to the good, but they cannot suffer from *remorse*. If they experience some present inconvenience, it will be soon overpast, and then they will have no regret in looking back on their conduct; Heaven will approve the struggles of virtue, and their character will rise from every trial.

Temptations to evil are no excuse for our failings. How will piety be known, if it be not tried? The merit of truth consists in avowing it in every circumstance, and in suffering all things rather than betray our integrity. Nor is there less danger to a youthful mind from the indulgence of vanity. A desire of appearing superi<sup>or</sup> either in talents or accomplishments, is frequently a powerful motive in some to pretend to more knowledge than they possess. Hence they are led to depreciate others, and, out of a vain pride, to put on an appearance of superiority, to which they are certain they have no just pretensions. This haughtiness of mind will make them deny the most convincing arguments; and while they feel that they are to blame, dispose them obstinately to persist in error, and to dispute the most clear conviction, even at the expense of truth as well as reason. Disgusted if they are opposed, their vanity will never acknowledge a fault; and if you ask them whether they are not convinced, they will sooner lie than candidly confess it; not considering that modesty, truth, and an ingenuous acknowledgment, is the best atonement for

human frailty, and will entitle those who possess such engaging qualities to every allowance of candour and generosity.

The pride of wishing to appear rich and great, is likewise in many respects a temptation to deceive. Whatever we are ashamed of, we have a desire to hide ; and some young and uninformed minds forget the distinction between things which are proper objects of contempt, and those that become so only from their mistaken ideas. All vice, every deviation from virtue, and every mean and base action, are the only just subjects of *shame* : and hence it must follow, that to be in indigent circumstances, to be dressed in plain clothes, or to be in any respect inferior to your companions, is no reason for your suffering such a painful sensation ; but if you make an apology which is *untrue*, and would hide your real situation by deceit, that is a sufficient cause to call forth the blushes of shame, and will make you despicable indeed in the esteem of persons of real worth. Be persuaded, therefore, always to appear in your true character.

Aim not at things beyond your reach. A

good heart is an object worthy of admiration in every station, and in all circumstances. Let *truth* be your guide through each scene of your existence. Maintain a sacred regard to that principle alike in your thoughts, your words, and your actions. Disdain even the appearance of falsehood, nor allow the image of deceit a place in your mind. This resolution will establish your reputation on the firmest basis. You will have no fear of any private inquiries, of any secret discovery ; but open, frank, candid, and honest, will receive the confidence of all with whom you are connected ; and, as the last and most glorious of all motives, will be entitled to the approbation of your Creator and Preserver,—of that God who is styled the God of Truth.

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## SUNDAY IX.

### ON PRAYER.

THE observance of this duty is so necessary to your happiness in this life, and so

needful to prepare you for the next, that I would wish with the greatest earnestness to enforce it.

You have been taught, that it is right to address your prayers every day to God who made you ; to express your thanks for his blessings, and to beg the continuance of his protection ; but though you may observe this custom without the least omission, recollect whether your *thoughts* accompany your *words* ; whether, in the form which you have been taught to utter, you do not repeat the *sounds* without attention to the *sense*. When you beg that God's will may be done on earth as it is in heaven, do you consider that it is a part of *that will*, that you should *pray* in sincerity and truth ?

Do you reflect, that the Almighty in a peculiar manner watches your thoughts, and will not accept the words which praise his mercy, unless the *heart* that offers them is grateful and obedient ? Do not, therefore, consider your morning and evening prayers as a part of the ceremony of dressing or undressing, to be performed in the same careless and indifferent manner ; but remember that it ought to be a *serious* and

*solemn* address to God ; that you are going to commend yourself to his protection through the course of the day, or the hours of the night ; that in the one case you should beg of him not to leave you to fall into temptation, but to guard you from the commission of wickedness, to strengthen your mind to continue in the paths of truth, virtue, and obedience : to thank him for his care of you from any evil accident during the night, and that you are again awake in health and safety.

Such reflections as these should occupy your thoughts in prayer, not the vain and trifling ideas of your dress, your amusements, nor even your learning. Every thing has its proper season ; but surely such imaginations are not suited to the time of *devotion*. If you accustom yourself always to recollect before you begin, on what subject, and to whom you are going to speak, it will make you more serious and attentive ; but if, with the wild and dissipated spirits of mirthful play, you heedlessly run from your sports, throw yourself on your knees, and *gabble* over your prayers, as if it were a continuation of the same

nonsense you have 'been engaged in ; it is not to be expected that your attention can be great, or that God, who sees your *heart*, can accept of such petitions.

The best Christians find it difficult, with all their care, to keep their minds so fixed as the holiness and goodness of the Deity demand in such a solemn duty. Surely, therefore, it must require pains to be taken by a child, whose thoughts are still more unsettled, to confine them to the serious subject. Let me advise you, then, to consider for what end it is that you pray at all. Whether you do not hope that God would bless you ; that he would give you health ; that he would enable you to improve in goodness ; that your sins may be forgiven ; and that, after this life is ended, you may rise from the dead, to enjoy everlasting happiness in Heaven ?

I cannot but suppose you really desire all these blessings : I am sure you must wish for them ; but can you imagine that your Creator will grant your request, when you do not *know* what it is that you ask ? and if you will acknowledge the truth, I dare say, *many* a time you have risen from your devo-



tions, without being conscious of a word you have uttered.

To those who pray with sincerity, that is, are attentive, and *think* of what they are about, many promises are made in Scripture. "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much," says the apostle. And be assured, that the prayer which is offered up in the best manner you can, will be heard, though from the lips of a *child*. God is no respecter of persons, nor does he regard the *age* of his worshippers: he will grant every proper petition to those who are of sufficient understanding to *intend* right, and who do their endeavour to perform his will. It is not the *words*, but the *attention*, that will please God. If you desire to be good, you must entreat the Divine assistance, that you may be able to resist temptation, that you may improve in wisdom and in virtue.

God is the best of all beings: therefore, by your prayers you do not make *him* more willing to do you good, for he is at all times desirous of your happiness; but, by becoming more obedient, and by asking for those blessings in a *proper* manner, you are better

disposed to receive them and use them as you ought, and therefore, are more deserving of God's favour. For, none who have been at prayer with seriousness and devotion, can go immediately and be guilty of any great wickedness : at least, it is not probable they should ; as it will certainly make them more apt to recollect the presence of God, and more careful to obey his commands.

Nor are you only to be thus watchful over your thoughts in *private*, and suppose that *public* prayer will give a sanction to your roving imagination. When you enter the temple of the Almighty, it is, or *ought* to be, to offer up your solemn petitions before him in union with numbers of your fellow-creatures, who are all professedly met together for the same purpose. Can you therefore imagine, at *such* a time, and on *such* an occasion, that your thoughts should be engaged by past amusements, or by plans of future pleasure ? that you should indulge yourself in the vain observation of dress and vanity, and survey, with an eye of scrutiny, every ornament of those around you ?

Do you consider that such sacred seasons

are designed to improve your heart, to animate your devotion, to exalt your piety to God, and to instruct you in your duty to man? What excuse, therefore, can you offer to your Maker for the abuse of such advantages? An account will be expected at the day of judgment of every such neglect.

Think of this in time, my young friend; and do not, by contracting an early habit of inattention, render your amendment more difficult. "Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth;" as you increase in years, endeavour to improve in virtue; present the Almighty with the first-fruits of an innocent heart, uncorrupted by the bad examples of the world. Offer up your fervent petitions, as the grateful effusions of an early sacrifice, which he will accept with peculiar favour. The cares of future life will render this attention a more *difficult*, though not a less necessary duty: but if you accustom the mind to serious reflection, to a due consideration of the awful presence of that Being whom you approach to worship: if you strive to banish every vain idea, by recollecting that he observes your most

secret thoughts, and that your prayers, if *unthinkingly* rehearsed, will become an abomination, will be *displeasing* to him : in such circumstances, you will habitually accustom yourself to seriousness in your devotion. But this is not an advantage which is easily attained. You must *persevere* in this course, if you design that it should succeed ; and by previous preparation, by reading and supplication, endeavour to strengthen your mind against the powerful temptation of a wandering imagination. Our thoughts are at all times difficult to restrain ; every object is apt to inspire some new idea, which gives rise to others, more and more foreign to the sacred subject which ought solely to employ them.

But all that is *difficult* is not *impossible*. God requires no more than his grace will enable you to perform, if you are not negligent in the use of it. He will excuse, in mercy, such errors as flow from human weakness. But he knows exactly how far that weakness extends : if you yield to it with approbation, if you indulge it by seeking those objects which dissipate your attention, then your frailty degenerates into

*guilt* ; then do you incur his displeasure, which is the worst of all evils, since nothing so terrible can befall you as the loss of his favour. On the contrary, if you are not wanting in your continued endeavours, to animate your mind with a just sense of the importance of this duty, although you may not always (or perhaps but very seldom) experience that high delight which results from its performance, and which those who are sensible of it, allow to exceed all other pleasures, you will still have the secret satisfaction that must arise from every *endeavour* to please your Maker ; and your petitions will not be disregarded by him who judgeth the hearts of his worshippers.

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## SUNDAY X,

### ON PRAYER.

IN every possible circumstance of life, you will find a habit of devotion a comfort and an assistance. It will add to the pleasures of prosperity, to remember with thankful gratitude the great Author of all your

enjoyments ; to praise him for those friends he has lent to instruct you, to improve you, and to heighten your felicity. You will commend them to his care ; your heart will expand to every generous and noble feeling, when you implore for *them* the protection of your Heavenly Father. You will find your affections for those who are dear to you, increased by your prayers in their behalf ; and, while you supplicate Heaven for their happiness, you will determine to promote it as much as you can, by a virtuous and exemplary conduct. Or, should you suffer from affliction, of whatever kind it may be ; are you in bodily pain, you will be able with humble confidence to ask a blessing on the means which are used for your recovery ; at the same time beseeching God to increase your patience, and to fortify your resolution to bear whatever he shall ordain you to undergo. Nor can you imagine, till you have learned by experience, what a satisfaction you will receive from this exercise. All other pleasures are insipid ; and amusements lose their power of pleasing, when we suffer from bodily indisposition : but we feel that God is able to assist us ; that

though outward applications are vain, though medicine should not immediately relieve, yet that God can give success to the kindness of our friends, and impart a healing influence to what is administered to us.

Whatever, therefore, is your situation ; however distressed your circumstances, look up to him who is a refuge in trouble. If you mourn the death of your parents, God is the father of the fatherless ; he protecteth the cause of the orphan ; his mercy can supply to you that greatest loss, and raise up new friends to cherish and instruct you. Endeavour to become worthy of his favour, by a strict attention to your duty, and you may approach his throne with full reliance, that he will hear you in the time of trouble. He has told you, in his Word, to call upon him ; and that “ those who come unto him he will in no wise cast out.” Does he not know your every secret distress, although you cannot reveal it to any mortal ear ? If you are disregarded by those you are with, if you feel forsaken and neglected, remember for your comfort that you have a friend, who (if you are

good) will never leave nor abandon you ; a friend, whom death cannot deprive you of ; whom absence cannot sever ; who will be present in every danger ; and who has the *power*, as well as the *kindness*, to assist you in all the possible calamities you can experience. Seek him then from the first dawn of reason ; accustom your heart to implore that sacred assistance, to give you increase of knowledge and wisdom.

In all your enjoyments, remember to acknowledge his mercy ; in all your improvements, thank him for the happiness of instruction, and for the powers which enable you to receive it. When you see others destitute of health, deprived of sight, of the use of their limbs, or of any of the comforts which you are so happy as to enjoy ; let it excite your gratitude to that Being, who has so liberally enriched you with his gifts ; and let your compassionate prayers for the unfortunate accompany the praises of a thankful heart.

To conclude : remember that there can be no real piety, without the exercise of true devotion ; and that unless you endeavour to recollect the object you address,



your thoughts will wander upon every other subject; and while you kneel before the God of Heaven, if occupied by the vanities of earth, be assured, that from such prayers you can experience no satisfaction, nor hope to have them accepted by the Searcher of Hearts.

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## SUNDAY XI.

### ON CHARITY.

SURROUNDED with all the comforts, supplied with every necessary, and abounding with the superfluities of life, young persons are apt to forget the sufferings of those in a less happy situation. They know, indeed, that the *poor* and the *unfortunate* exist in some obscure dwellings; and when they *behold* the miserable objects, the sight of them may inspire some transient feelings of compassion. But, my young friend, a Christian must do more than *pity* the wretched. If you would imitate the example of your Divine Master, you must *relieve* their distresses; you must alleviate their sorrows, and soften the rigours of poverty. Perhaps

you will think, that as you have but a small allowance at your age, the duty of charity may be excused. Yet consider, that if you can dispose but of a *little*, your own wants are all amply supplied; and you may surely spare from the gratifications of fancy to those who are destitute of every convenience.

Consider how many worthy families eat to-day their scanty portion; and, when they rise from their unsatisfied meal, the cravings of hunger are hardly appeased; and yet they are uncertain where to find the next supply. How many, to the horrors of penury, add the bitter pangs of disease? Reflect for a moment, how hard *you* find it to suffer the agony of pain, although relieved by every art of medicine, and soothed by the kind endearments of every sympathizing friend! But if you could repair to the desolate mansion of poverty, you would behold none of these comforts to abate the anguish of the sufferer. Unknown to the world, the physician is not summoned to his assistance; those necessaries which might alleviate the distemper, he has no money to procure. Unable to rise, and

provide, by his usual labour, for his accustomed supply, he must lie there and perish, unseen, unattended, unassisted, and unlamented. Or, if he have the blessings of relations, his wife and children do but too often share the same unhappy fate. Shut up together in one small unwholesome apartment, they breathe the infectious air of sickness, till the like disorder extends to each of them, and they have only the additional misery of being the mournful witnesses of each other's sufferings.

Think not that I am speaking of *imaginary* woes; such scenes which I have mentioned are but too frequent and too real. The living and the dead are mingled together in the same contracted room and all the horrors of sickness and poverty are aggravated by the unwholesome connexion. Little do *you* think, while you are in a state so different, while you perhaps are vexed and provoked at every trifling disappointment, how many at this moment suffer the most heart-rending calamities! how many are confined in a loathsome prison, far from their wretched families, who are left to starve in their absence; confined for the want of a trifling sum, which they have

not the ability to discharge. I dare say you will pity such distress; but what can *you* do? Can it be thought that the small share of riches you possess can any way assist such heightened calamity? Perhaps not; but in such a case God will accept the benevolent *design*, instead of the intended *deed*: for he accepteth "according to what a man *hath*, and not according to what he hath *not*."

But these pages may be read by some in more affluent circumstances: to all, however, the widow of Zarephath, and the poor woman who threw her two mites into the treasury, are held forth as an example. I do not mean that any are expected to make themselves *poor* by their *donations* to others; but that even those in indigent circumstances, by dispensing a *little* of their small store to those who are still *lower* than themselves, may be entitled to that providential care which ordained, "that the barrel of meal should not waste, nor the cruse of oil fail, till the Lord sent rain upon the earth."

I would wish, therefore, to persuade my young readers, instead of spending the whole portion allotted to their own disposal,

in baubles, trinkets, or whatever objects may engage their inclination, to reserve a *part* for the relief of the necessitous. And, if they have any sentiments of religion or duty, if they have any feelings of humanity, they will not esteem the sum which they so dedicate as productive of little pleasure. On the contrary, they will find, that to have contributed to stop the falling of *one* tear from the overcharged eye of affliction; to have fed, though but for *one* meal, the starving appetites of a hungry family; to have clothed, though but with a *thin* covering, the shivering body of the naked sufferer; will afford them more true satisfaction to reflect upon, than they could receive from the most elegant trinket which the hand of luxury might present. Such toys may be the occasion of present pleasure; but that gratification is soon past; the eye soon grows familiar to the most beautiful productions of art, and indifference will then succeed to desire. But in the exercise of duty, in promoting the happiness of others, there is an enjoyment which will last for ever; as every recollection of a *good* action is a return of the felicity which it first bestowed.

By a habit of prudent economy much may

be saved ; and if you lay aside what in your conscience you think you can spare from your income, to be disposed of in charitable uses, you will have a fund ready at all times, and be more easily disposed to discharge your duty in this respect, than if you consider each particular sum as depriving you of some indulgence. For, whatever you think it reasonable to dedicate to this benevolent purpose, you ought to regard as the *property* of the *poor* ; and not allow yourself to be so unfaithful a steward, as to spend *their* small provision in your own vanity or pleasure. Without such a distribution, you will be apt to put off your good intention to a *future* period, to wait for objects in *greater* need than those whom you could immediately assist ; and, in short, to grow hardened against the feelings of *pity*, by the mean arguments of selfish avarice. I would certainly advise you to a discreet choice of the objects of your bounty : in this, as in every other case, your parents will be your best advisers ; and, if you accustom yourself to reflect, you will easily perceive what cases are particularly deserving your compassion. It is impossible to

lay down any general rule in a matter which each one's circumstance must determine. The higher in life Providence has placed you, the more extensive ought to be your charities. Nor can your time be employed to greater advantage, than in attending to such tales of distress as may be mentioned before you. It will not be easy, at your age, to seek out (in person) the sufferers who want your assistance ; but you may inquire of others for those melancholy objects with which every neighbourhood does but too unhappily abound. Or it is most probable, that, within your own acquaintance, you are connected with some families, whose honest industry is insufficient for their support. If you are honest to discharge this obligation to your fellow-creatures, you can never be long in want of the method or the means. Frugality will assist you in the most material part ; and the world is too full of the *unfortunate*, to make the discovery of them a very difficult task.

## SUNDAY XII.

## ON CANDOUR.

THERE is a *charity* due to mankind in *general*, which is much more extensive in its signification than that of alms-giving. The one relates only to the *poor*, the other comprehends many virtues, and is explained by St. Paul, in his epistle to the Corinthians, as the substance of all our social duties. This charity, he tells us, “suffereth long, and is kind; it is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil, rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth.” I shall not attempt to extend your thoughts at present to the whole of the amiable picture which the apostle has drawn of this divine virtue, but confine myself to that charity which disposes us to bear with our fellow-creatures, and to judge kindly of their actions; not to expose their faults without occasion, or so to delight in iniquity as to take pleasure in evil-speaking. It is often seen that young persons of good-nature and understanding are guilty of this fault through



mere *inattention*. They have heard some of their acquaintance represented as behaving improperly; and, without any further reflection, repeat to the next company with whom they are engaged all the invidious particulars. This may indeed furnish matter for *present* conversation; but you should consider the future *consequence*. A *good name* is a property of such inestimable value, that nothing can recompense its loss. Nor can you tell how far the repeating an ill-natured anecdote may affect the absent person. Those who first told you the unkind report, may have spoken the truth; but consider how many ways *truth* may be altered in the representation; and the person so accused might be able to justify himself entirely by the account of some circumstances, or some unknown reason, which would fully vindicate his conduct. Is it not highly unchristianlike, then, to run the chance of injuring the innocent, for the trifling amusement of having something to say?

But, perhaps, you find a greater enjoyment: the persons you describe to others in a ridiculous or a blameable light, may have

excited your envy by their good qualities, or by being in a more agreeable situation than yourself ; and therefore you are pleased with an opportunity to receive any thing to their prejudice. But is this either generous or just ? Should you like, in similar circumstances, that they should act so by you ? How would you wish to be treated if you had done any thing wrong ? Should you approve of those who would publish the tale to others ? Could you esteem or love them ? On the contrary, if you had been spoken of with slight or contempt, and any person had vindicated your character, had checked the reports of ill-nature, or mentioned your praiseworthy actions ; would it not inspire you with a tender regard for them in future ? You would experience a satisfaction in their company, and feel delighted to hear of their success. Surely, then, the same motives ought to excite every one to be careful how they ridicule the follies or imperfections of their acquaintance. It betrays a contemptible narrowness of mind ; is inconsistent with the candid spirit of a Christian, and with the great example of charity which our Divine Master displayed, when he so mildly

told the accusers of the woman taken in adultery, that those who were *without sin* amongst them should cast the first stone at her. Those who had been so vehement and earnest in calling for justice on her crime, "went out," says the sacred historian, "one by one, being convicted by their own conscience." And certainly this was recorded to teach us, that even where a person is *really* guilty of a fault, we ought not to aggravate their crime, and publish it to others, but to reflect how *many* errors we ourselves are conscious of, and, if we are judged with rigour and severity, how little claim we can have to kindness or pardon.

Perhaps you will say, the offence is well known ; it is become the public talk : very likely this *may* be the case ; but had the *first* propagators of ill report been actuated by *charity*, the scandal would not have spread so widely. Every one to whom you repeat it (if before ignorant), becomes an additional person informed, who will have it in his power still further to extend all the bad consequences which attend a loss of reputation, and render it so much the more difficult for the offender, by a future reforma-

tion, to regain a forfeited good name. In truth, there is no opinion more dangerous to a young person, than the idea, that their example is of no use in society. It is by the addition of units that all numbers must be composed ; and therefore each *one* may be of general service by his virtues, or of general evil by his vices ; as they each add strength to the cause either of religion or of wickedness. If you corrupt *one* companion by your follies, that *one* may in like manner seduce a new acquaintance ; till your guilt, and the ill effects of your misdemeanors, may extend to thousands. In like manner, though you esteem yourself of such trifling consequence in life, be assured, that, by a regularly pious conduct, you may influence numbers to follow the same noble path ; and however it may not appear to be your work at present, yet you know not from what seemingly *unnoticed* circumstances a good impression has been frequently produced. You may rest certain, that there is nothing more likely to make others imitate and love you, than a constant attention to that divine precept, of always doing unto

others as you would they should do unto you."

Conscience, in this case, if you consult her faithfully, will dictate the proper conduct. As *you* would like to be treated, so behave to all with whom you are connected. Indulge no selfish passion at the expence of good nature. The safest side is always to be *kind*. You cannot err in *concealing* the infirmities of others, where *truth* or *honour* does not require the publication; and by a heedless repetition of all you may hear, you are liable to occasion much unhappiness. Do not encourage ungenerous suspicions; for "Charity thinketh no evil." The *appearance* of an action is often deceitful, and "to his own master each one must stand or fall." God only is the searcher of hearts, and can be acquainted with the secret motives which may aggravate or excuse. "Judge not, and ye shall not be judged. Condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged; and with what measure you mete, it shall be measured to you again."

## SUNDAY XIII.

## ON DEATH.

I THINK I cannot better close these meditations than with a subject which must concern every reader,—with a subject, though it may appear to be most distant from those for whose use this little volume is designed, yet as the tenure of life is so uncertain, the *youngest* reader may be perhaps the *first* to experience the consequence of—*death*. There are so many accidents, so many distempers, from which no prudence can secure, no situation can exempt, nor the strength and vivacity of youth guard their possessor, that you will do well to consider how far you are interested in that momentous period. Death, my dear friend, has no terrors but what are the consequence of guilt. It is the happy moment when every temptation shall cease, when every evil shall be at an end : and what matters it if you are called from a world of trouble at an early age ? Happy will be your lot to be spared from all the dangers that might shake your virtue in a longer trial. The only thing,

therefore, which should concern you in the prospect of this solemn period, is, to consider whether you are prepared for that future judgment which is to follow. You know what are your designs, and how far you endeavour to act up to that reason and those advantages which the Almighty has given you. "Beloved," says the Apostle, "if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God ;" that is, if, upon a serious examination of your life, after sincerely considering the motives of your conduct, and comparing your actions with what you know is expected from you ; if then you can faithfully say, I have, as far as I could, constantly endeavoured to do my duty ; I have tried, by reading good books, to improve my understanding, and to follow the advice, and profit by the examples which they afforded me ; I have observed the instructions of my parents, and obeyed them in all things within my power ; when I have been guilty of any offence, I have been sorry for it, implored the pardon of my God, and determined to be more careful for the future ; I can truly say that I have felt no envy, malice, nor ill-will to any one, but have done *some* good in

the world, though perhaps it has been in my power to be more useful ; I have been honourable and just, have strictly observed the truth, both in my words and actions ; I repent of all my sins, and hope in the merits of my Redeemer ; if you can say this without evasion (I do not mean as a boast of your good deeds to others), and can answer, as in the presence of the Almighty, that this has been your course of life, and your constant endeavour ; then you may quit this life without fear, and have a just foundation for confidence in God.

Remember, that to deceive yourself, and to hide your faults by vain excuses, however it may *now* quiet your conscience, will be of no avail at the day of judgment. Every emotion of your heart is known to the Divine Being. Be not afraid, therefore, to own your transgressions, and to confess them before him at present ; but while you have life, health, and opportunity, determine to amend. Whatever may have been your failings, and how privately soever they may have been committed, they are known, with every aggravated circumstance, to your Judge. This thought cannot be too deeply impressed.



Every passionate emotion, every ill-natured intention, however disguised, every deceitful word, with each angry, revengeful resolution ; in short, every evil *thought*, is known and remembered by God. The days, and months, and years of life, succeed each other so swiftly, and so much alike, that you may be apt to forget the period of death, though it will certainly arrive. Many as young as yourself are every hour surprised ; and who can tell how soon it may be *your* fate ? If you defer your amendment to a more convenient season, that promised season may never arrive. You may not live to see the time you have fixed for your improvement ; and how sad will be the reflection, that, for the sake of some present trifle, to obtain some slight gratification, you have forfeited your honour by deceit, lost your good temper by petulance and resentment, or in any manner incurred the displeasure of God. A *good conscience* is the greatest felicity ; *that* alone can give you satisfaction through life, and comfort you in the hour of death. With the assurance of having acted rightly, how delightful is the prospect of futurity ? The

greatest and the best of beings is your friend : he will not be extreme to mark what you have done amiss, but will pardon the natural imperfections of his creatures.

*Wilful* crimes alone, continued in without repentance or reformation, will subject you to the misery and punishment of a future state ; but then no *evasions* can deceive his knowledge. Recollect this, and examine yourself impartially. Do not accuse others of being the occasion of your crimes : each one must answer for his own guilt : you will not be judged by the measure of *their* transgressions, nor acquitted for *their* virtues. Did you know your duty ? Did you practise it ? Answer to yourself these plain questions, and seek not to justify what you perceive has been faulty, by blaming others. Suppose, for instance, that your companions have been passionate and provoking :—that was *their* offence, for which they must answer : to you this injurious behaviour was a temptation ; how did you bear it ? If you were angry in return, gave back defiance for their menaces, resolved to be spiteful in future, and tease them when you should have

power ; *this* will be *your* guilt, and you may dread its punishment.

If others fail in their duty, it does not excuse you. The being provoked by unkind treatment, may add to the merit of a mild and gentle demeanor, but can never set aside the necessity of virtue. We are too apt, especially in the warmth of youthful resentment, to think we have a right to return malevolence by equal ill-nature ; but this is the suggestion of *anger*, not of *duty* : and when you come to be on a sick bed, to be in danger of *death*, you will think differently. The present is the only time to make use of good reflections, by putting them in practice. Spare yourself, then, the pain of future remorse, by considering, while you have opportunity, how your actions will appear to you at such an awful period. With what pleasure you will then recollect the resistance you have made to any evil inclination ; what joy you will experience in reflecting upon every good action ; how much delight it will be to consider each instance of your *sincerity*, *obedience*, *affection*, and *piety* ! How infinitely

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will every sacrifice or self-denial be overpaid by the consideration of the reward to which you are hastening. And, as this time *must* arrive at *some* season of your life, as you do not know how soon it may surprise you ; is it not worth all your care and attention to make it happy and desirable ? To avoid all the agonies of a guilty conscience, terrified by the dread of punishment, and a fear of meeting that God, who is the *friend*, the *protector*, and the *gracious rewarder* of the *virtuous* ; let me, therefore, in conclusion, entreat you to remember, how trifling every earthly concern will appear to you when you come to die. Let me conjure you to present your early days, as a pleasing offering to Heaven ; not to embitter your *future* hours by mis-spending the *present* : to arm your mind with fortitude ; and by reflecting, that if *now* you suffer difficulties, *hereafter* you shall rejoice in Heaven. If vice appear more easy and alluring, and virtue require some trouble to obey her at all times ; yet the recompence that awaits you is *glorious*, and the evils you will avoid are dreadful beyond any thing you can imagine.

## SUNDAY XIV.

## ON THE IMPORTANCE OF EARLY PIETY.

**WHEN** I consider the importance of your religious principles, I cannot avoid being solicitous to impress them strongly on your mind. The happiness of this life, and the hope of futurity, depend upon your present character. If the seeds of virtue are not sown in youth, no fruit can be expected in age. Every hour which is now lost to improvement, is an irreparable disadvantage to each succeeding period. The time which elapses to-day in negligence or folly, no future wishes can recall, nor future diligence repair : because, however repentance may bewail neglect, or vigilance endeavour to atone for past misconduct, yet no industry can renew that opportunity which you have once suffered to escape. Reflect, therefore, with the serious attention which such considerations ought to inspire, that every hour now wasted in frivolous pursuits, diminishes the space allotted for your preparation for eternity ; and must lessen that share of glory and happiness you were created to

enjoy hereafter. Think, therefore, with awful veneration, on the present period of your existence. Life is now, as it were, a blank before you. The surrounding multitudes of earth and heaven are intent on your conduct, to observe the course you will pursue. May it be yours, my young reader, to make the best determination, that you will "remember your Creator in the days of your youth." The interests of this life are uncertain; and must soon terminate for ever: but the duties of religion, constantly attended, and invariably pursued, will secure your present peace, and establish a just ground of confidence for eternal felicity. Let me urge you, therefore, with that warmth which the subject demands, to form a steady resolution of regulating your conduct, in every instance, by the sacred laws of rectitude and virtue. Consider, that to delay your attention to what is necessary, will increase the difficulties of the execution. How animating is the design of setting forward with the noble hope of being an example to others, and of engaging the care of your Maker, by an early self-dedication to his service !

I suppose you to be now of an age soon to renew, in your own behalf, the covenant which was made in your name at your baptism : and that, after having been instructed in the obligations you owe to God, and to society, you are disposed to promote your own happiness, by a voluntary acceptance of that solemn engagement. From this time, therefore, you begin to establish your character in life. And how greatly is it in your power to promote the cause of religion, and revive the spirit of piety and goodness in all around you ! You know not how long you may be spared to the world ; and this uncertainty should excite your diligence to improve, to the best advantage, the time now lent you by Heaven. Your friends expect the comfort of their remaining days from your merit and excellence : your country's highest hopes of future prosperity must depend on the virtues of the rising generation ; and each one who is added to the number of the *good*, is an additional guard to save it from impending calamity, since they engage the divine favour as their peculiar protection. Let me warn you, not to be content with inferior

attainments ; but let the ardour of youth be directed to its proper end, and enkindle the sacred inclination to be first in all that is praiseworthy. " Whatsoever things are pure, lovely, and of good report, if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise," let them excite you to persevere in well-doing. Though you are not far advanced in life, yet, my young friend, there are already numbers rising around you, who will regard your example as the model they will hereafter copy ; and those who are of an age to be your present companions, may owe, (through the divine blessing) their future establishment in virtue to your advice, assistance, and example.

The great Governor of the universe has endowed all his rational creatures with talents capable of improvement : and it is impossible to ascertain to what a height of excellence the human powers may reach. As the faculties of the body acquire strength and vigour in proportion as they are used ; so the faculties of the mind may doubtless be greatly exalted by diligence and perseverance. Every thing that is *difficult* is not impossible. If you are discouraged by the



prospect of labour and fatigue, you will never rise to eminence and glory. The prize which is adjudged to merit, must be won by industry. But remember, for your encouragement, that you toil not for a perishable but an incorruptible reward. Good habits may be formed by resolution and care, and evil dispositions are to be corrected by the same means ; and good habits, by degrees, ripen into active virtue, and establish the character of the Christian. The dedication of your best days to the service of your Maker is the most pleasing sacrifice you can ever offer up before him ; and be persuaded, that he will regard it as an acceptable oblation. If you quit the paths of virtue in youth, you will labour under almost insurmountable difficulties when you desire to return : and believe the experience of all ages, when you are assured, that however joyfully you may begin the career of folly, you will find it is embittered by shame and remorse as you proceed ; and when you wish to leave the ways of wickedness, distress and anguish will unavoidably attend you. For though you may *sin* with pleasure, you cannot *repent* without pain. Must it

not then be the highest proof of folly, to engage in such a course of action as will unavoidably subject your future hours to regret? And whenever you are seduced into a deviation from duty, you lay the foundation for certain misery: since your *best* hopes must be placed in the penitence and reformation of succeeding years. You cannot, surely, yield to the temptation of guilt, with the intention of meeting the supreme Judge without repentance: nor would the most daring transgressor violate the divine law, but under the expectation of a reconciliation with his Maker, before he entered into his more immediate presence. And can the tears of remorse, the vexation of self-reproach, and the fearful terror of eternal punishment be so desirable, that you will risk the hope of Heaven on the prospect of an uncertain repentance? I allow there are difficulties to be encountered in the progress of virtue; but those who begin the race with the commencement of life, will escape the most formidable evils, and the severest opposition. They will proceed with increasing delight, as they advance in their progress; and the retrospect of the

past will afford fresh encouragement for their ensuing trials. While, on the contrary, those who have been led astray, and have unhappily followed a "multitude to do evil," will experience that the assaults of inclination are strengthened by continued habit; and will find, that a higher degree of resolution is necessary to break the bands of wickedness at once, than to persevere in well-doing.

The season of youth is, in every respect, peculiarly important. It is the period in which the foundation of every future excellence must be laid; it is the time best adapted to, and most capable of, improvement. The natural and mental powers are then fitted to the acquirement of knowledge; and the docility of temper usually attendant on the early hours of life, render that time particularly favourable to every good impression. Neglect not, then, my young friends, the golden opportunity, which, once elapsed, will *never* return. The forfeiture of your innocence, no power in the universe can restore: your transgressions may be pardoned through the merits of the Redeemer; but you can never regain the

satisfaction of looking back with delight on the days of your youth. The recollection of your sins will continue to goad you through the succeeding stages of your journey, and cast a gloomy shade of apprehension and sorrow over your final hour. The consequence of your example will be lessened to the world, while the memory of your evil actions are remembered to your disadvantage ; and the principles of piety in your own bosom will be shaken, by the common sophistry of attempting to justify a wrong conduct by the false reasoning of deceitful argument. With a design to assist your endeavours in the practice of habitual goodness, the following pages are submitted to your perusal ; and if through their means you are led to serious consideration, or strengthened in any laudable resolutions, the author will be happy in the success of the plan, which was designed entirely for the benefit of the youthful reader.

## SUNDAY XV.

## ON THE EXAMPLE OF CHRIST.

**THERE** is no higher incentive to *great* actions, than the contemplation of those examples who have been renowned for heroic virtues, and who have exhibited the principles they taught by a conformable conduct. In this view the life of our divine Redeemer will at all times afford instances of such excellence as will be a perfect model for imitation. No human character is without some defect ; and, perhaps, while you admire what is worthy, you may, by the weakness of partial prejudice, be led to copy what is improper. But in every action of the Messiah, you behold the amiable effects of virtue unalloyed by frailty ; for though he was in all points tempted like as we are, it was without sin. Yet, perhaps, while you allow the merit of this divine pattern, you will be apt to consider it as beyond the sphere of your emulation, and may object, that the Son of God cannot be proposed to your imitation, since he was

possessed of powers and abilities more than human. But do not the Scriptures inform you, that one of the reasons for which he took our nature upon him was, "to leave us an example, that we should follow his steps." "Be ye therefore," says the apostle, "followers of God, as dear children, and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us." And many of the actions of his life were performed, as himself informs us, that we should do likewise. It may not, therefore, be improper to trace out some particulars, wherein young persons may imitate their divine Master, and fulfil the sacred covenant, of fighting under his banner against the world, the flesh, and the devil. And first, as the grace of humility is so peculiarly amiable at your age, you will find this lowly virtue distinguish the conduct of our Saviour through every part of his life. Although he was in the beginning with God, and all things were made by him, yet he condescended to be born without any of those distinctions which the vanity of mankind are so apt to desire ; to prove to his disciples, that outward accommodations and external pomp have in themselves no real

value ; but that the dispositions of the heart only are regarded by Him " who seeth not as man seeth." Whatever, therefore, may be your situation in the world, Jesus Christ has taught you, that the highest virtues may be obtained in the most indigent station. He has ennobled poverty, by sharing its necessities ; and has led the way to glory through the path of humiliation. Be not ashamed of these circumstances which he has sanctified, nor fear the contempt of the world, since our Saviour also has experienced its frowns. If, on the other hand, it has pleased your heavenly Maker to exalt you above others, by appointing you to an elevated rank in life, the Prince of Peace has taught you condescension to your inferiors in the most direct and striking manner, when he stooped to wash the feet of his disciples ; as if to impress humility on his followers by one of his last acts, " when he knew that his hour was come that he should depart unto his Father," and that he was then going to be exalted, as a recompence for his obedience and sufferings. " Knowing, therefore, that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come

from God, and went to God ;" he rose from supper and laid aside his garments, and took a towel and girded himself. After that he poured water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded. So when he had finished, and taken his garments, and was sat down again, he said unto them, " Know ye what I have done to you ? Ye call me Master and Lord : and ye say well, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, you ought also to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you. Verily, verily, I say unto you, the servant is not greater than his lord, nor he that is sent greater than he that sent him. If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them."

Though these words were immediately addressed to the apostles, they were recorded for our instruction ; and whoever is inclined to despise another because he is inferior, either in fortune or understanding, should remember this example of Christ. The difference which subsists between the highest rank and the most destitute condi-



## LECTURE XV.

n, is not so great as we behold between  
r Redeemer and those whom he thus hum-  
ed himself to serve. Be not ashamed,  
efore, my young friend, to behave with  
adness and affability to all whom Provi-  
nce has placed beneath you. Remember  
t you are equally dependent on the same  
nty, and that, as he has exalted, so is he  
all times able to abase you. "For the  
st high God ruleth in the kingdom of  
n, and appointeth over it whomsoever he  
ll." The force of example has ever been  
eemed superior to the wisest admonitions.  
ere is an animation of soul which arises  
the contemplation of great actions, that  
spires a desire of imitation; and while we  
ntemplate the image of virtue in the exer-  
ns of active life, the mind is raised, in  
me measure, to partake of those senti-  
ents which are the foundation of what it  
plauds. In the conduct of our divine  
aster, we are shown what human nature  
is designed to be; and the more we copy  
s exalted pattern of excellence, the near-  
shall we approach to the perfection of our  
ing. In every action of his exemplary  
, you behold the model which his follow,

ers should imitate : patient to the infirmities, and gentle and forbearing to the sufferings of others ; he had no failings of his own to claim excuse ; yet was he pitiful and candid to the wayward temper of his disciples ; and bore with their dulness, inattention, and neglect, without reproach. Nor was this meekness the effect of mean servility, or timid weakness. He had no fear of displeasing others, when his character and duty obliged him to reprove. He rebukes the Pharisees, and drives those from the temple who had polluted its sacred courts by their unhallowed traffic. With all the ardour of zeal for his Father's glory, he asserts the respect that is due to the place of divine worship, and proclaims his just indignation for its insulted honour. By this testimony he exhibits the true distinction of a noble spirit, which is unmoved by the negligence or provocation that affects vulgar minds ; and is above the resentment of injuries done to itself, but is warm and steady in its resistance to the enemies of God and religion. He will not listen to the angry advice of his apostles, and call down fire from Heaven to punish those who would

not receive him ; but he maintains his own dignity and the majesty of his Father, in the last and trying scenes which preceded his death. To the Roman governor he boldly says, he could not have that power which he boasted, to acquit or condemn him, unless it were given him from above. With the same intrepid firmness he asserts his character and mission to the high priest and assembled Jews, who were met together to contrive his destruction. With undisturbed composure he hears their false accusations, nor is provoked to return one single expression of anger to all their ungenerous insults. But when asked, " Art thou the Christ, the son of the Blessed ?" he replies, with the fortitude of true courage, " I am : and ye shall see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of Heaven." He well knew that this noble acknowledgment was what alone his enemies desired, to justify their pretended eyidence against him. But he was called to bear witness to the truth : and though assured that the hour of his final sufferings was at hand, he withheld not that open confession which would hasten its ap-

proach. Thus did he instruct his followers, in the most trying and perilous seasons, to be unmoved in their integrity, to bear all the violence of malicious power, and the revilings of undeserved abuse, without any return ; and, with the silence of submissive resignation, wait the proper occasion to vindicate and assert their insulted innocence.

Surely, my young reader, you must admire this bright example of your Redeemer, as you peruse the history of his life : that life which presents a series of poverty, sufferings, and persecutions, and which was concluded by a painful and ignominious death. When you trace the annals of history, it cannot but delight you to meet with characters who were renowned in the age in which they lived, and whose memory is transmitted to posterity with the fame of having excelled in virtue. Yet the records of the most faithful historian are in some measure doubtful, compared with the authentic testimony of the gospel of truth. But admitting their validity as unquestioned, still, still you are not concerned in the recital, any further than the common interest which the human mind must feel for the

fate of superior worth. In the pathetic account of your Redeemer's actions, you read the relations of facts the most indisputable, which were designed as a perfect copy for *your* imitation. The agonies which they represent, were sustained for *your* sake, and voluntarily endured by the divine sufferer, with the benevolent design of expiating *your* offences. If any motive can touch the susceptible heart ; if any subject can interest the principle of self-love ; if the improvement of time, or the fate of eternity is important : if duty can bind, or gratitude urge your consideration, the example of Christ must have influence, and engage your endeavours to tread in his steps.

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## SUNDAY XVI.

### ON THE POWER OF CONSCIENCE.

THE great Creator of the world has, with infinite kindness, provided for the comfort and happiness of all his creatures. But, as the interests of the soul are much more important than the concerns of the body, he

has, in a particular manner, secured our virtue, by the promulgation of such laws, as, if observed, would ensure to mankind the highest comforts of the present state, and fit them for the enjoyment of eternal felicity after death. With the benevolent intention, that every rational being should be acquainted with the rules of duty, and the path of rectitude, he has given us a law written in our hearts, that the most ignorant and uninstructed may discern good from evil, and, by this inward sense, be led to avoid what is wicked, and to choose what is praiseworthy in action. This internal feeling of the mind is the *power of conscience*, which the Almighty Governor of the world has bestowed on each individual, as a preservative from error, and a guide to virtue; and its secret influence is acknowledged, as soon as we are capable of thought and reflection. Conscience is a judge in our own bosoms, and can, by the appointment of God, punish the most secret crime with inward uneasiness and distress; while every good action, nay, every good *intention*, is rewarded with such serene self-approbation, as may serve for our immediate recompence.

But we are apt to neglect the admonitions of this silent monitor, although our happiness entirely depends on a constant attention to its dictates. "God is greater than our hearts, and knoweth all things; but if our hearts," that is, our conscience, "condemn us not, then may we have confidence towards God."

You, my young reader, who are just setting out on the journey of life, should most invariably attend to the apostle's example, and endeavour to have always a "conscience void of offence." You must, whatever is your situation in the world, have already experienced its power. When you have committed a wilful fault, you have found the regret and shame of your own mind has immediately succeeded the offence, although it was acted in secret, and no human witness could detect the crime. God is present every where; and your conscience is the judge he has commissioned to acquit or condemn you, while in this state of being. Our *actions* are subject to the censure or applause of mankind, and their decision may, from various causes, be unjust: but our *thoughts*, and the motives which consti-

tute our real merit, are known only to God and our own hearts. It is possible you may have been most warmly commended for such parts of your conduct as, having proceeded from a base intention, were deserving of reproof. In such a case, have you not felt an internal shame, which has converted that undeserved praise into the keenest reproach. These natural sensations of the mind are alike in *all*, unless perverted by an obstinate continuance in guilt; and I would hope, that none of those to whom these pages are addressed, have arrived at so dreadful a state of depravity. The remonstrances of conscience may be partially subdued, by a determined resolution to continue in a course of wickedness; but even the most hardened offender must experience intervals of remorse; and there are some seasons of recollection, when conscience *will* be heard, and make the most unthinking tremble. May you, my young reader, be persuaded, on all occasions, to attend to the soft whispers of that power implanted within you. Consider the reproaches of your own mind as the warning voice of heaven, and endeavour to keep "your heart ten-



der," if you would obtain the approbation of your God. The sense of duty is improved by the advantage of superior knowledge ; and the benefit of divine revelation has enlightened the human mind, and directed you to a certain and unerring rule of life. But St. Paul informs us, that God had given conscience as a law to the most ignorant and darkest ages, and that hereafter they will be judged by that law, as they were not acquainted with any higher authority. This law, as he expresses it, " being written in their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing, or else excusing one another." Consider, therefore, that this sacred principle is sanctified to you by the clearer doctrine of revelation. You are born in the most enlightened age of true religion ; and have the advantage of Christian parents, and of religious instruction ; and though in the former times of ignorance God (we are told in the Scriptures) was willing to excuse, " yet now commandeth he all men every where to repent ;" because now our ignorance must be wilful, and therefore unpardonable. Endeavour, as you possess

such superior blessings, and such certain information, to act up to the high character you bear as "a member of Christ, a child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of Heaven." The law of the Gospel does not annul, but directs and strengthens the power of conscience: and by this mean, we are enabled to apply its important instructions to the direction of our conduct, in the daily instances of social life. It remains, therefore, that you seek at all times to be well informed, and, as far as possible, to banish prejudice and passion from your judgment: and then attend seriously to the suggestions of conscience, as you will answer it at the awful day of judgment. With such impressions on your mind, it is scarcely possible to fall into atrocious crimes. Human nature is frail, and the best disposed may be surprised into error; but under a constant and habitual sense of God's presence, and a strict attention to the voice of conscience, you will be in a state, of all others, most favourable to good impressions, and the most likely to engage the succours of divine grace. Amidst the circumstances that occur in common life, you may not be able

easily to recollect, or apply the sacred instructions contained in the Scriptures. The secret impulse of conscience will supply this defect of reflection, and enable you immediately to determine on a judicious conduct. If you be tempted to an ungenerous or an evil action, you will consult your own feelings, and ask yourself, what is kind, noble, or just, in the situation in which you are placed? and as your heart shall determine, so endeavour to act; and you may be assured, you will not be in danger of any great error, if you be truly honest in attending to its decision. This sacred principle is particularly strong in the early part of life, as yet unimpaired by the force of bad example; and is intended by your Creator as an immediate guard to virtue, before the powers of reason have attained their full maturity. Happy would it be for mankind if they would cherish and improve this tenderness of heart, and by a constant attention to its first suggestion, save themselves from succeeding guilt and consequent remorse. Those who have the advantage of a good education, may profit by the advice of their parents and instructors; and reap the fruits

of experience, without sharing the pain of its acquirement. But there is a general propensity in youth, to disregard the affectionate solicitude of the wisest counsellors, and to follow their own inclinations, even at the expence of their future happiness.

In the present instance, however, I may venture to apply to yourself; for, surely, my young friend, you are already sensible of the power of conscience. Let your memory recollect those instances of conduct, in which you have transgressed any acknowledged duty, or omitted the performance of some incumbent obligation. Have you disobeyed the commands of your parents? been guilty of fraud, artifice, or dissimulation? have you been unreasonable in your expectations? behaved with obstinacy, sullenness, or determined malice? have you neglected your religious duties, either from indolence or pleasure? Whatever crimes you are conscious of, and however undiscovered they may remain; yet, did you not, on such occasions, find the truth of Solomon's observation, that "the spirit (or innocence) of a man will sustain his infirmity; but a wounded spirit who can bear?" On

this subject, therefore, you may, in some degree, form a judgment from your own conviction. You are not called upon to trust to the sentiments of more venerable authority, but to believe *your own feelings*, and to rely on your past experience. The voice of nature, in its most simple state, bore testimony to the power of conscience ; and the doctrine of revealed religion has confirmed this awful sentiment of former ages, and established its judgment in the human breast. However you may neglect its reproaches, or act in opposition to its friendly counsel, you must be unhappy whenever you deserve its censure : since God will ratify and confirm that sentence which conscience, as his delegate, shall pronounce.

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## SUNDAY XVII.

### ON THE POWER OF CONSCIENCE.

As we cannot escape the sense of guilt, nor avoid the reproaches of conscious remorse, it should be our care, by constant

watchfulness, to secure the peace of an innocent mind. This greatest comfort is independent of the world; it is a satisfaction which its highest enjoyments cannot bestow, nor the most severe frowns of adverse fortune deprive us of. If you should be exalted, even by royal dignity, and distinguished by the splendid pomp of the proud monarch of Babylon, yet the hand-writing on the wall, or the stings of a guilty conscience, would have power to suspend your mirth in the gayest scenes of festivity. The Almighty in this instance has made all his rational creatures on a level. The convenience of riches, and the ostentation of greatness, may excite the desires of the young and inconsiderate; but though such advantages contribute to our comfort (if well applied), they cannot insure us happiness: and numberless instances, both in sacred and profane history, have established this fact, and attested it by the strongest examples. The Roman governor, though attended with pomp, and placed on the tribunal of judgment, could not resist his inward emotions; but while his degraded prisoner stood before him, dependent on his

power, and subject to his command, he was himself arraigned at the bar of conscience, and as the "apostle reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled." What a striking contrast does this incident exhibit, between the confidence of integrity, and the terrors of guilt ! St. Paul, oppressed with the fetters of bondage, accused by his enemies, and thrown into an ignominious confinement, is brought before the representative of Cæsar ; who, surrounded by his guards, in all the majesty of state, beckons to the victim of malice to plead for himself. With the simplicity of innocence, and the conviction of truth, he defends his cause, and confronts his accusers : for he must ever be above the fear of human power, who can make this modest, though glorious assertion, "That herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence towards God and towards men." Undaunted by the false accusation of the malicious Jews, and unimpaired by the presence of Felix, who favoured their design ; he boldly confesses, that, "after the way which they called heresy, so worshipped he the God of his

fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and the prophets ; and having hope toward God, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust." The knowledge of this future retribution, it may be supposed, was what appalled the soul of Felix, when he again sent for the apostle, " and heard him concerning the faith in Christ." He was convicted by the reproaches of conscience ; and, though he trembled with present remorse, yet he was unwilling to listen to the salutary admonition ; he could not bear the force of St. Paul's convincing arguments, and therefore was eager to dismiss him with the answer, " Go thy way for this time ; when I have a more convenient season, I will call for thee." I will not, at present, further pursue the history of Felix, though it is well worthy your attention ; but will entreat you to observe the noble confidence of St. Paul in this interesting transaction, as recorded in the twenty-second, and four following chapters of Acts. The guilty will, like the Roman governor, tremble in the most magnificent palace : while the virtuous, with the great apostle of the Gen-



tiles, will be self-collected, calm, and intrepid, in the gloom of a prison.

You, my young friend, to whom these pages are addressed, have the whole of life before you ; if your opening days have been gilded with the sun-shine of prosperity, remember that *Virtue* only has the power to render exterior blessings truly valuable. You may possess *fortune* without *happiness* ; but, in every condition, a *good conscience* is an essential requisite to enjoyment.

With this valuable provision secured, whatever storms may hereafter arise, you will be prepared to meet them with manly fortitude. The affairs of life often fluctuate and change ; but he who is at peace within, has a steady principle of comfort, on which outward accidents have no power. “ If our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God : ”—confidence that he will uphold you in prosperity with his blessing, and make your earthly enjoyments the earnest of future felicity ;—confidence in his mercy in the time of trial, that if his wisdom allot you to a state of poverty, you shall still be rich in his favour, and in your hope of a heavenly inheritance ! you will have confi-

dence in God, if your friends be removed by death, that he will supply their loss by his protection ; and, however destitute your situation, however deserted and hopeless your worldly prospects may appear, yet you have this best consolation to support you, that you may “ cast all your care on him,” who hath declared that “ he careth for you.” A good conscience is, in some degree, the foundation of faith. It is an internal assent to the truth of the Gospel, and may be compared to the good ground mentioned in one of our Saviour’s parables ; which being in a proper state to receive the seed when sown, brought forth some fifty, and some an hundred-fold increase. Thus many excellent characters among the heathen philosophers have proved the law written on their hearts ; and, by the distinguished virtues of a good life, have evinced that they were a law unto themselves. Such men would have received the instructions of revelation with satisfaction, gratitude, and affiance. On the minds of a Cato, a Socrates, or a Seneca, the truths of revelation would have had full power ; because having nothing to fear from the expectation of a future state, they would

have readily embraced those doctrines, which, clearing away the uncertainty of doubt, would have assured to them the knowledge of a life after death. Having lived conformably to the dictates of conscience, though unenlightened by superior information, they would have apprehended no terrors from a religion, which teaches the comfortable doctrine of pardon to the penitent, and peace to the returning prodigal—pardon and peace purchased to mankind through the mercies of God, and the merits and sufferings of his son. While the hypocritical Pharisees, who were desirous that all their good deeds should be performed in the sight of men, with a view to acquire a reputation of piety, made long prayers, and affected much appearance of sanctity and outward austerity ; yet they, as false professors of religion, persecuted the Messiah, and rejected his instructions. “They appeared unto men to fast,” and our Saviour assures us, “they *had* their reward ;” which implies, that as they performed the duties of devotion and abstinence only to gain the applause of the world, they must be content with the veneration of the multitude ; since

they would receive no recompense from God; for he esteems the virtues of the *heart*, and not the outward adorations of hypocrisy. The Scribes, or expounders of the Mosaic law, opposed the preaching of Christ from a similar cause. And although their office consisted in reading and explaining to the people that very law which was to be perfected by the coming of the Messiah; yet having perverted its precepts, insisting only on the *ceremonial* part, and neglecting to observe the weightier matters of *judgment, mercy, and truth*, so from this corruption of hearts they renounced "the holy one, and the just," and crucified the Lord of life. But the pious Nathaniel, whom our Saviour pronounced "to be a man without guile," was soon convinced of the truth of his mission, and readily made the candid acknowledgment, "Rabbi, thou art the son of God; thou art the King of Israel." Hence you may learn the agreement between a good conscience and sound principles. That as the moral laws of equity, truth, and virtue, were implanted in the mind of man by his Creator, so the Christian system does not contradict, but *raises, completes, and esta-*

*blishes* it by higher motives; ascertains the hope of a future recompence to the just, and of punishment to the wicked; and finishes, by the glorious plan of redemption through Christ, the scheme of eternal goodness in the formation of man.

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## SUNDAY XVIII.

### ON THE POWER OF CONSCIENCE.

As man is a being formed for immortality, he must be anxiously solicitous to know in what state he shall exist when he leaves the present. And the Scriptures have satisfied this important inquiry by the assurance that as God has raised up his Son from the dead, so he will raise us up also by him. Nor are we left in doubt as to the particulars of the situation which will then be assigned us. The righteous, we are expressly told, shall rise to everlasting life (or the *happiness* of everlasting life), and the wicked to shame and everlasting contempt. The testimony of conscience will, therefore, be further useful in informing the mind on what

foundation its further hopes may with certainty be placed; and how far, consistent with the promises of God, it may reasonably expect eternal felicity.

The Gospel of Christ is the only means of salvation, and the clearest revelation of the will of God, which he has given to mankind; and we are there positively assured, "that if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God." Can any information be more important to our happiness? The uncertainty of life is evinced in the daily experience of every one. We see numbers fall around us in the bloom of youth, and with the florid appearance of health, which seemed the earnest of many years' earthly enjoyment; but the most robust constitution sinks into weakness, when disease invades the frame; and those whose strength appears to promise the longest continuance, are also easily removed, when the Almighty gives command to strike. However, as death is an event equally certain to all, if we are but prepared for its summons, the time of its arrival is of small importance. The fear of death is occasioned by sin, and the dread of future pu-

nishment distresses the soul with awful apprehensions. But if you would wish to escape the worst terrors of dissolution, examine into the state of your conduct, "prove your own selves," that so you may have boldness in the day of judgment. You may sincerely call to remembrance the general tenor of your thoughts, behaviour, and actions, and must attend to the determination of conscience without partiality, or else you will deceive yourself, and build your expectation upon a wrong foundation. The subject is deserving your most serious consideration, as a false confidence, in a matter of such importance, is highly dangerous. The true state of your soul cannot be determined from a few particular actions: it must be known by comparing the usual bent of your disposition with that rule of duty revealed in the Scriptures. Is your temper habitually gentle, meek, and submissive? Do you make it the great business of life to improve in all that is praiseworthy? Are you sincerely desirous of instruction? And do you exert your endeavours to practise those virtues which are recommended to your attention? In your present limited

sphere of action, do you consider an implicit obedience to your parents as one of the first and greatest of your social duties? Are you at all times solicitous to comply with their injunctions, and contribute to their happiness? Do you endeavour to subdue every evil propensity which would interrupt your progress in a religious course? Are you careful to silence the rising emotions of petulance, pride, sullenness, and passion? Do you accustom yourself to frequent reflection, and exert you vigilance to subdue those evil inclinations, which, if indulged, will be the destruction of your future peace, and ruin of your eternal hopes? Are you assiduous in the cultivation of every generous principle? and do you labour to subdue that self-love which would lead you to a sordid preference of your own interest, in the neglect of every nobler consideration? Do you seek to promote the pleasure, and alleviate the uneasiness of every one with whom you are connected? And is the consciousness of Divine observation the constant and uniform motive to regulate your behaviour? Are you serious and attentive in your religious duties, and



sincerely anxious to secure the favour of God, independent of earthly considerations? If upon such an impartial review of your conduct, you have reason to conclude that you have led a life of virtue, and that you continue your unremitted endeavours to reform every thing amiss in your temper, you have the most rational ground of self-satisfaction. The promises of the Gospel are made to every individual, upon the conditions of faith in Christ, and earnest endeavours of obedience to his laws. And as God is immutable in his word, we may safely depend on the acceptance of our *sincere*, though imperfect service, through the merits of his Son; because it is on those conditions he was engaged to receive his penitent and believing creatures, and to accept of the sufferings of our Redeemer, as a sufficient atonement for the sins of mankind.

The decisions of conscience must, therefore, as I have before observed, be the only just foundation of your future hopes. That awful judge which the Almighty has placed within you, will now anticipate the sentence of acquittal or condemnation, which you

will hear at the last great day of final retribution. Consider, therefore, from what has been said on the subject, how much it concerns you to regulate the whole of your conduct upon the principles of religion and virtue. I appeal to the conviction of your heart, that it is necessary for your present comfort; since, however you may be misled by the example of licentious manners, or your sentiments perverted by libertine opinions, "God has not left himself without witness?" and you have experienced, and will find, whenever you degenerate into guilt, that the internal feelings of self-reproach assert the presence and observation of the Deity, and fulfil the prophetic denunciation, that "there is no peace to the wicked."

When therefore you are disposed to silence the reasonings of this inward director, or to doubt the necessity of virtue and religion, allow your heated passions a moment's time for reflection, and you will be convinced, from conscious experience, that there is a Power above, who directs that power within you, and who, in defiance of evil prejudice, the ardent wishes of guilt, and the false sophistry of infidelity, will

make you *feel* its authority, and dread the accomplishment of its award. If your religious principles be in danger of being shaken by the conversation or example of others, examine carefully whether your doubts of the truths of revelation do not arise from a desire to escape its awful denunciations; since vice will endeavour to deny those sanctions which arraign her evil propensities: and those, who can have no hopes of *happiness* in a future state, will be glad to resign its expectation, rather than incur the danger of a miserable eternity. But, surely, when you consider that such a weak and false reliance is the usual source of infidelity, it should incline you to cultivate the virtues of the heart, and, by conduct which may defy reproach, give your mind that generous and unprejudiced temper which is open to the impression of truth.

As a conclusion to the subject, allow me again to remark, that the animating prospect of felicity beyond the grave, which is founded in the testimony of a good conscience, is a rational and calm support during all the vicissitudes of life: it inspires

a pleasing trust and a firm faith in the promises of God; and while it proves the insufficiency of human strength, excites the warmest gratitude towards the Father of mercies, and the benevolent Saviour of men; conveys that "peace of God which passeth all understanding," and in the last struggles of departing nature, is a cordial to the anxious spirit, which, under the influence of Divine grace, will render serene and joyful that solemn period of existence.

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## SUNDAY XIX.

### ON QUARRELLING AND CONTENTION.

IN the present state of being, it will happen, says our blessed Master, "that offences come, but woe to him through whom they come; it were better for him that a mill-stone were hanged about his neck, and he cast into the sea." And surely this may be said with truth of those contentious spirits, who are ever ready to take affront at the conduct of others, and careless in what manner they regulate their own.

Such a disposition must be unhappy in itself, and communicate its malignant influence to all around. He who is displeased with his companion or friend, cannot behave to him with courteousness and affability. He is ready to misinterpret his most innocent words, and misconstrue his most inoffensive actions; and by the same circumstance will enkindle his resentment when under the power of ill-humour, which in a happier moment would pass unobserved, or perhaps meet with full approbation. It is impossible but that offences will come. You cannot expect, my young friend, that the opinion of your companions will be always regulated by your taste; nor is your judgment at all times dictated by prudence, and the result of wisdom. Each individual will, in turn, submit to the sway of capricious humours, and stand in need of allowance for those failings which they censure in the conduct of others: whenever, therefore, you feel a disposition to be captious and petulant, recollect that your temper is then in that state which is most likely to mislead your judgment. Your companion may be to blame; but cool impartiality is not to be

expected from a disposition heated by passion, or subject to the irritation of peevish disgust. Wait for the calmer moment of reflection, and then seriously examine, whether your own conduct has been free from error. If you have said any thing with a design to provoke the offending person, you may be sure you are reprehensible. If your conscience convict you of having increased the resentment of your companion, by your looks, your words, or your actions, it should put you on your guard for the future, and engage you the more readily to forgive a fault of which you have at least partaken; and in almost every misunderstanding between friends, it will be found, upon examination, that both parties are in some degree to blame. Things in themselves of trifling consequence are usually the foundation of contention. And those who are willing to foment disagreement, will never be without a cause of quarrel. But, my dear reader, as you prize the felicity of your future life—as you value the approbation of the good, the esteem of the wise, and the love of mankind in general—as you hope for favour from the omniscient

Judge of all, be persuaded to guard your heart, with the utmost caution, from this detestable propensity. One word of discord may raise a spark of animosity, which no future period may be able to extinguish. "Blessed are the *peace-makers*," says our Lord, "they shall be called the children of God:" for he delighteth in the happiness of all his creatures. Anger and resentment dispose the mind to jealousy and suspicion. From those with whom we are displeased, we naturally expect ill-will in return: we are ready, as it were, to anticipate their dissatisfaction, because we feel that discordant principle toward them. And if you have ever experienced this evil inclination, you must be conscious that it is the author of misery. A heart at peace with itself, and pleased with all its connexions, is the seat of calm delight and serene happiness. You take pleasure in the society of those you sincerely love, rejoice in every incident which affords them comfort, and those gentle feelings of good-nature revert back with redoubled satisfaction, to your own bosom. "Be not easily provoked," says the Apostle; and it is a needful caution to

young persons, who are too apt to be offended without cause, and to return expressions of resentment without reflection. If your companions be peevish and uncomplying, it will not render them more agreeable should you vex and provoke them in return; for if "a soft answer turneth away wrath," the grievous words of displeasure certainly stir up anger. Be convinced also, that when you look back on what gave rise to the quarrel, and calmly consider the part you have acted, many words which you might then regard as highly provoking, will appear to have been spoken without any design of offence; and perhaps you will discover, that you have deserved that censure which you bestow on your companion. If the disagreement should happen (as is but too often the case) between you and your brothers or sisters, reflect seriously on the near relation in which you stand to each other. You are children of the same parents, united by the will of your Creator, and bound by the ties of mutual interest to promote each other's welfare. How shameful is contention between those who are placed in a situation



which ought to inspire the highest degree of concord and agreement !

Perhaps you may urge, that your disputes are not of any serious consequence, and that you have a very tender love for each other, although you sometimes differ in opinion ; that such trifling quarrels do not diminish your affection, but that you cannot bear to be imposed on by your companion. Excuse me, my young friend, if I presume to doubt the truth of the assertion. Love is not to be increased by opposition and disunion. Examine your own heart, and consider impartially, whether, after any difference, where your peace has been offended, your temper ruffled, and your inclination opposed, you feel the same tenderness towards the object of your resentment, as you would have received from a mutual interchange of kind offices ? And, believe me, it is a truth too often evinced by melancholy experience, that where cordial esteem and mild affection are not cultivated in early life, they seldom bloom in a more advanced age. If you neglect those little attentions, which, though insignificant in themselves,

are of great importance towards conciliating the regard of those with whom you reside, the warm sentiments of fraternal love will be chilled by disgust, and that principle of natural friendship, which would have blessed your future days with the most heart-felt satisfaction, will be lost for ever, or succeeded only by a formal intercourse of cold civility. The Almighty seems to point out such near relations as the destined companions of your life : they have every advantage which can be a proper foundation for lasting union : as your equals in rank, as dependent on the same care, as surrounded by the same connexions, as accountable to the same parental authority, and frequently residing together, and pursuing the same course of study, or the same occupations and businesses. With what anxious grief must it afflict the authors of your being, if they should perceive you break through all these tender ties, and, by childish contention, or habitual ill-humour, lay the sad foundation for lasting dislike ? Whenever you are tempted to engage in any kind of altercation, endeavour to restrain your anger for a few moments, and consider,

whether the occasion of your displeasure will justify you in making yourself or your friends unhappy : whether it will recompense you for the sacrifice of your own temper, the love of those with whom you dispute, the approbation of your parents, the peace of your conscience, and the favour of your God. You may probably object, that every degree of idle bickering does not deserve the serious epithet of a *quarrel*, or render you obnoxious to these severe penalties ; but let me remind you, that many a dispute which was begun in jest, has ended in blood ; that petulant expressions provoke a passionate reply, and that, as the wise man justly observes, "That beginning of strife is like the letting out of water, that runneth apace."

In general it may be asserted as a truth, that in every disagreement some expressions are used by each party, which upon reflection they have reason to regret. An unkind observation, or an unfriendly sentiment, is easily uttered at such a time ; but when by *you* it is forgotten, it may continue to rankle in their hearts to whom it was addressed, and they will often recollect it to

your disadvantage, when the difference which occasioned it is forgotten. This observation should make you cautious of speaking at random, a custom to which some young persons are much addicted. From a natural warmth of temper, uncorrected by reflection, they express, without thought, all that passion may dictate, and, with a design to provoke, say every thing which occurs. Led on by a vivacity of spirits, ill applied, they delight in the most poignant strokes of satire : they will ridicule the mental defects or natural imperfections of their nearest relations and dearest friends, without considering the injury they are doing themselves ; and while they sport with the feelings of others, they are losing their esteem, and lessening their regard. God has so constituted our frame, that when we give pain to others, we must wound ourselves. Thus, self-love becomes a guard to the peace of society : universal affection is the principle of universal happiness ; and the more amiable you appear to others, the more agreeable will be your own sensations. When you are at variance with any one, you must be uncomfortable ; as a generous dis-

position will be wretched, unless in harmony with all the world.

If your heart is open to the tender emotions of sensibility, reflect on the ill consequences of a quarrelsome disposition ; and if ever you are surprised into a dispute with any of your companions (especially if it be a brother or sister), endeavour to procure an immediate reconciliation. Do not be too proud to make the first concessions, although you may imagine yourself in the right it is a small punishment for the commission of evil ; and whoever is engaged in a quarrel, is in that very instance guilty of a fault. If you part with enmity in your bosom, are you sure that you will meet again in peace ? Life is uncertain to all, and youth will be no exemption from the grave. If a sudden stroke of Providence *should* remove the object of your displeasure, examine your heart, what would be then its sensations ? Would not every unkind expression strike your mind with remorse ? Would not this disagreement be regarded as a most distressing event, and heighten you sorrow for the loss of the departed ? Would not every remembrance

of your past affection be tinged with regret, that it should have so bitterly concluded? And would it not aggravate your misery to think the offence could *never* be repaired? Such would be your feelings if you were the survivor. Think whether they would be more easy if you were laid on the bed of death? Would a scene of contention be a proper preparation for eternity? We should always be prepared against a possible event; and whenever we retire to rest, should close our eyes in such a frame of mind, as we would wish to be found in at the awful summons to judgment.

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## SUNDAY XX.

## ON SICKNESS.

It is one of the first duties of humanity, to endeavour, by those means in our power, to alleviate distress, or to soothe the sufferer, whom we cannot otherwise assist. With a view to lighten the anguish of disease, by some considerations suitable to your situation, I would address you, my young friend,

now you are confined to the gloomy chamber of sickness. Perhaps you may esteem it a very irksome and uncomfortable place, in comparison with those livelier scenes of festivity and pleasure to which you have been accustomed; and though pain is equally an evil to all who feel its influence, yet it must be confessed that the animated spirits of youth may find the restraints of weakness peculiarly burthensome. But there are motives sufficiently powerful to reconcile the mind to this stroke of affliction, when you consider, that "whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth," and that this visitation may be sent in mercy, as a proof that you are under the care of Heaven.

It depends upon your own conduct to sanctify your sufferings to the noblest purpose; and, by patient resignation to your heavenly Father, to make your present trial the means of your everlasting felicity. The events which befall us are ordered by the best and most benevolent of all beings; therefore we may be assured that they are designed for our good; since he doth not willingly afflict or grieve the children of men.

The sickness under which you at present labour, may be intended as an exercise of those virtues you would otherwise have no opportunity of practising; and, by calling your patience into action, give you a glorious occasion of showing to all about you an example of faith in God, and of obedience to his will. And as he knoweth our frame, and is perfectly acquainted with human weakness, so he regards with favour every attempt to suffer, with quiet resignation, that anguish of body his wisdom sees it proper to inflict. When, therefore, you are overcome by the weakness of disease, or feel those acute sensations of pain, which incline you to loud lamentations or petulant complaint; endeavour to moderate the excessive indulgence, which persons in such circumstances are sometimes but too apt to allow themselves: recollect that you cannot avoid or escape from that power who thus afflicts you; but that as the wounds of disease come from the arrows of the Almighty, he has also the means to heal. He watches over his afflicted children with the tenderness of a compassionate father; and when with piety they implore him, he is ever ready



to strengthen their fortitude, if not immediately to remove their troubles. "Trust, therefore, in the Lord, and he shall bring it to pass." His mercy only can give success to the means which are used for your recovery; his wisdom must direct the physician's skill; his energy bestow the gift of healing to every medicinal draught; and his blessing attend on the anxious cares of your affectionate friends—or all those advantages united will be ineffectual to remove your disorder. Whatever, then, is your situation in life, look up to God for ease and returning health. If you possess those blessings which distinguish a state of affluence, be thankful for an advantage which, in such a season of distress, must be doubly comfortable. Reflect how soothing are the endearments, how agreeable the attendance of those you love! And though the bed of sickness is uneasy and irksome, yet thousands of your fellow-creatures, equal to you in excellence and virtue, "have not where to lay their heads." While you suffer the parching thirst of that fever which has infected your frame, think how many feel the same disorder with equal violence, with-

out the alleviation of those cooling liquids, or lenient remedies; which give you so much relief. Let gratitude mingle with your complaints, when you consider how highly favoured is your lot; and let your pity be extended to suffering poverty, from the reflection of your present feelings. Your indisposition may give rise to the noble virtue of sympathy, and soften your heart to the commiseration of those evils in others, which you will best compassionate from experience. If Providence should spare your life, forget not what you now suffer; and recollect, that if you are pleased with the attention of others, if you desire they should excuse your wearisome groans, should be ready to supply your wants, and contribute to the amusement of your tedious hours, the same gentle forbearance will become *your* duty toward the sick and helpless. Remember of what you now stand most in need; and when health has removed the pain of languishment, make it your endeavour through life, as far as your abilities extend, to succour those who require your assistance. Relieve the poor, by procuring such necessaries as your power or interest can command; and

return the care of your parents and friends, by every attention which may recompense their love. Thus will you have reason to rejoice at this now afflictive dispensation, and bless the friendly sickness which has inclined your heart with greater sympathy to feel for the distressed. This season of pain may be further serviceable to you, by engaging your reflections on the true value of life: for, my young friend, how insignificant do those amusements appear at present, which in the gayer moments of health you have regarded with such anxious expectation. Your taste can have little relish for the nicest dainties, and the liveliest strains of harmony would perhaps disturb and offend you; outward ornaments and decorations must be equally useless, while your frame is tormented with agony, or trembling with weakness. You find, therefore, that however riches and pleasure may add to the comforts of life, we must seek for some higher good to support us in the period of sorrow. The only thing which can then raise the dejected spirits, and enable us to sustain the trial of affliction, is the consciousness of having acted rightly, and

the hope of acceptance with God. When we look back on our past actions without remorse, we have greater encouragement to implore the favour of Heaven: when we have remembered our Creator, been attentive to his laws, and prayed for his assistance while in health, we shall be more disposed to implore his blessing, and seek to him for relief in the melancholy hours of sickness: when goodness has once become habitual, it will have an effect on our conduct in every period of life; and those who are thankful, pious, and humble, in prosperity, will be cheerful, resigned, and patient, in adversity. It behoves you, then *quietly* to endure your present sufferings, and to prove yourself a disciple of Christ, by a meek submission to the state allotted you; readily to follow the guidance of your friends, but chiefly to implore your God to restore you to health, strength, and usefulness. Nor be alarmed, my young friend, if your disorder should resist the force of medicine, and threaten you with the approach of death. Your fate is in the hands of a good and merciful Father, who will do whatever he sees altogether best for you. Resign yourself, therefore

entirely unto his direction. Those who love you best, are not so solicitous for your welfare, as he who formed you from the womb. If he sees it proper *early* to remove you from life, he will take you to himself, and to endless and immortal happiness. The improvements which growing years might have bestowed upon you on earth, will be amply supplied to your soul in heaven. You will be spared the trials and temptations which longer life would have exposed you to, and which, perhaps, might have led you astray from the paths of virtue ; and though you are obliged to quit your earthly friends, yet your God can supply every lost relation, and restore them to you in a happier world.

Endeavour, while you continue in life, to bless your parents with the delightful prospect of every generous virtue : let your thankful gratitude to God and to them evince your sense of his mercies and of their tenderness : strive to suppress those complaints which must distress their affectionate hearts ; and make them happy by such an easy temper of mind, and gentleness of manners, as may, whether you

be removed from them, or spared to their prayers, give them occasion to rejoice. "If we suffer with Christ, we shall also reign with him," says the apostle ; that is, if we bear our trials here with the like patience which distinguished our Redeemer, we shall hereafter share in his reward, be exalted to that felicity which the worthy and the good shall enjoy, and be ranked with those "who through much tribulation have entered into the kingdom of God." Be not discouraged with the idea, that you are too young, or too useless an object, to obtain the Divine approbation ; nor suffer yourself to imagine, that it is a matter of no consequence, in what manner you sustain the disorder with which you are visited ; "for God seeth not as man seeth : man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart." If therefore, from a motive of duty, you check the murmurs and complaints you would otherwise indulge—if you endeavour to encourage religious reflections, to recollect what has been amiss in your conduct, to repent of your past errors, and resolve, by the grace of God, to amend your life, if it

be prolonged—if you pray sincerely that his goodness would graciously promote your recovery, yet with submission to his determination, either to live or to die—if you strive to make this excellent use of your bodily weakness, it will certainly be attended with the happiest effects; it will promote a spirit of gratitude and obedience to your Maker, incline you to honour and thankfully acknowledge the love of your parents or assisting friends; make you more compassionate to the sufferings of your fellow-creatures in the like distress; convince your mind of the vanity of every earthly enjoyment; and excite your desire to become worthy of that felicity which will crown all your virtues with an eternal recompence in another life.

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## SUNDAY XXI.

### ON RECOVERY FROM SICKNESS.

WHEN we labour under any painful or acute disorder, and human means are found insufficient to our relief, we are naturally

led to implore the assistance of that Being whose power is equal to every emergency, and whose goodness inspires us with the hope, that our earnest application will succeed. This truth you, my young friend, must have fully experienced in the late visitation of Providence. While you lay on the bed of sickness, did you not implore the Father of mercies to abate your uneasiness, to remove your distemper, and to bless you with a return of that ease and enjoyment, of the inestimable value of which you were then peculiarly sensible? And did not your parents and friends unite with you in those prayers, and in ardent wishes for your recovery? Recall to your remembrance the scenes of anguish through which you lately passed: if your sufferings were then severe, to whom are you indebted that you are now free from pain, and that your strength is renewed from the depression of weakness? Whose hand has preserved you in trouble, and restored you to the hopes of future life? And surely, if God has prolonged your period of probation, and given you a renewed opportunity of instruction, you are engaged by gratitude to employ your added



years in his service. It is your duty to make the proper application of this gentle chastisement, and to consider what may be the probable ends for which it was inflicted. Perhaps your heavenly Father may have designed it as an exercise of your faith and patience ; as a gracious trial of your trust in his mercy, in those circumstances where all outward application, and human tenderness, were ineffectual. It might be intended as a lesson to you of the insufficiency of every other reliance, but a dependence upon your God ; and may teach you how weak and unsatisfactory are the most envied distinctions of this world, when the great Governor of all things shall take from you the capacity of enjoyment. If, hereafter, you should be tempted to an undue solicitude for any temporal gratification, let this recollection abate the ardour of your desires. Consider, that what you have once proved to be incapable of affording satisfaction, and what sickness occasioned you to despise, cannot be worthy your pursuit, nor repay your sacrifice of duty and conscience. If you are now, through the mercy of God, blessed with a cheerful prospect of future

health, and feel the vivacity of youth return with returning ease ; yet, let me caution you, my dear reader, not to forget the gracious warning which this sickness was designed to enforce. Has it not afforded a confirmation of the uncertainty of that strength in which you rejoice ? If you have been brought near to the gates of death, it was to admonish you to prepare to enter them ; it was to remind you that youth is no security from the grave ; and if Providence has given you a present respite, it is with the intention of engaging you to be ready, whenever he shall see fit to summon you. If your prayers were ardent in the season of pain, your thanksgivings should be in proportion to the deliverance you have received.

In general it is to be feared, that the gratitude we feel for present enjoyments is seldom proportioned to the energy of those supplications we offer up to God in the time of affliction. But surely, when you recollect the danger to which you have been lately exposed, and the obligation you owe to him who hath healed all your diseases, you will be induced to praise him for his mercies, and will suffer a great remembrance of his

goodness to actuate your heart. Reflect, that although your days have been prolonged, they might have been protracted in a state of weakness, which would have deprived you of the means of improvement, and rendered your existence a burthen to yourself, and to all with whom you are connected : and though, in the most uncomfortable situation we are bound to possess our souls in patience, and to acquiesce in the appointments of God ; yet, we are undoubtedly engaged to peculiar acknowledgments when our lot is distinguished by such particular favour. How many, who, like you, have been afflicted, and still have experienced a continuance of their trials, in the distressful consequence of their distemper—sometimes by such a weak and debilitated constitution, as has rendered them incapable of fulfilling the common offices of life ; sometimes by the loss of limbs, or deprivation of sight ; or what is yet more dreadful, by weakening the mental powers, and reducing the wretched sufferer to the condition of an idiot ! These, and many more evils, have been occasionally seen to follow the attacks of violent disorders : and if you, my dear reader,

have been so happy as to escape them, through the mercy of Providence, endeavour to possess your mind with a lively sense of your high obligation, and to return the tribute of praise, "not only with your lips, but in your life." Think that you are now more immediately called upon to dedicate yourself to Heaven, and to offer to your God that being which he has preserved. Whatever have been your former transgressions, "Go and sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee." Remember the resolutions you made in the time of sickness, and, by repeated recollection, renew the serious impressions which you then felt.

The conduct of a Christian should be at *all* times regulated by the precepts of the Gospel; but there are some seasons that occur, in which a more than ordinary degree of religious attention seems to be necessary and becoming. The state in which you now are, when just recovered from a severe indisposition, may be properly esteemed a period when every motive of propriety and duty call upon you "to consider your ways." You seem, as it were, to begin your existence

anew, to be reinstated in the privileges, and again endued with the powers of life. Every function has been interrupted in its course, to remind you, that all your abilities of action, and your capacity of usefulness, is derived from God; and that if he withhold his supporting aid, or suspend the operation of his usual influence, your whole system must suffer the most terrible effects: nor can any human assistance, without his appointment, have the least efficacy to restore you. It is God, therefore, who has again given you to enjoy the calm slumbers of uninterrupted rest, who has invigorated your nerves with strength, and re-animated your languid spirits with cheerful serenity. If you have once more an appetite to relish the blessings of wholesome food, to partake of the pleasure, and to feel the advantage of exercise, through each period of the day, or when you lie down to repose, let every action you perform, and every enjoyment in which you are enabled to share, remind you of the value of health, and direct you to its constant improvement. If it is so uncertain, use it carefully while you possess the blessing; and let your soul

expand with continual ejaculations of praise to your all-gracious Preserver. Consider how soon you may be again subject to disease : and let the idea of such a probable interruption to your duties and attainments incite your utmost diligence to attend the business of the time before you. The term of your existence will be sufficient for every necessary purpose, if it be properly applied ; but there is no season designed for waste or idleness. The duties required of the sick and helpless are patience and submission ; but when God has restored you to a capacity of renewed exertion, he expects you to be active and employed. Let no ill habits of indolence or indulgence follow the unavoidable neglect which weakness has occasioned ; but be assiduous to gain the time which is lost ; and, whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might, for, adds the royal teacher, “ there is no work, nor knowledge, nor device, in the grave, whither thou art going.” Assured of the protection of Infinite Goodness, it will be of little importance whether the past hours have been spent in pain or in delight. The memory of evil is forgotten, when it ceases to afflict :

and though it may be grievous to have lost the space which you had designed for purposes of utility; yet He, who in mercy ordained such an interruption to your good intentions, can find many ways to supply to you this deprivation, if you be earnestly solicitous to employ the time which remains. Above all, my young friend, let this truth be established in your mind, that the Divine assistance must ever co-operate with your exertions, to render them effectual. "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." Such is your encouragement to apply to God, through the mediation of Christ; and the more sensibly you feel your own weakness, the more it should dispose you to ask wisdom and strength of Him, "who giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not." As you have been recovered from disease and danger, you may be certain you are reserved to answer the wise dispensations of an over-ruling Providence; and it may be, you are spared to be an example of virtue and obedience to succeeding generations. You may be designed by Heaven to become one of those exalted

characters, who shine as lights in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation ; to become the succour and support of merit discouraged by oppression, -or the consolation of dejected poverty. You may hereafter soothe the melancholy hours of those parents who lately watched beside your bed of languishment, and thus repay, by your filial and grateful attentions to their declining age, the solicitude they have experienced for you. As you have been restored to health, it will become your present state to look forward with a pleasing hope of becoming useful, and of deserving esteem ; and while you reflect on that mercy you are particularly called upon to commemorate, it should animate your heart to rely, without anxiety, on the future care of your heavenly Father ; since he who has saved you from the ravages of sickness, can never want the power to deliver you from any distress in which you may hereafter be involved.



## SUNDAY XXII.

## ON GRATITUDE TO GOD.

THERE is a natural propensity in the human mind, to love and venerate those from whom we have received instances of kindness and affection, even such as are themselves deficient in proper acknowledgments to their benefactors, yet join to condemn the appearance of ingratitude in others. But although the absence of this amiable principle excites a detestation of the character where we imagine it to be wanting ; still there are few minds so truly virtuous as to consider with sufficient abhorrence that unthankfulness which we exercise toward the greatest and best of beings.

The relation in which we stand to our Creator comprehends all that is supposed to inspire obligation in the various connexions of life. As a subject, are you not accountable to that Being who is the universal Sovereign of the Universe, the King of kings, and Lord of lords ? and should you not cry to him, who, as the Prophet ex-

presses it, "is your Father, and the Guide of your youth?" To his bounty you are indebted for all your various enjoyments; and your hopes of felicity, through time and eternity, must be derived from his inexhausted munificence. If you are happy in the care and protection of your earthly parents, the affectionate endearments of fraternal love, or the kind attention of more distant relations, look up with gratitude to him from whose mercy all these blessings do originally flow. In every social enjoyment consider his goodness as the source of your comfort; since the friends who thus delight, improve, and animate you by their converse, receive the power of pleasing from God, who is the fountain of all that is amiable in created excellence. While, therefore, you reap the benefit of their talents, and love them for their kindness, remember, my young reader, that you owe to your Creator that satisfaction which you experience in his creatures. Reflect also on the past period of life, and you will be able to trace his goodness, even before the time that memory can recollect. During the helpless season of infant weakness, his

watchful care preserved you from evil, and led you in safety through a thousand accidents, which no human precaution could have prevented, nor wisdom less than infinite have foreseen. In every instance of danger within the reach of your remembrance, you may discover the concurrence of second causes, as guided by a merciful God for your preservation; and forget not, in the serious reflection upon such events, that every *fortunate circumstance* which attends the case, and prevents an additional calamity, is, in effect, the manifest exertion of Providence in your favour.

Let me earnestly recommend you to exercise the pious habit of considering all the vicissitudes of your present state as under the guidance and protection of a good and gracious God, who will order every circumstance as may best promote your ultimate advantage, if you disappoint not that design by wilful guilt. In no season of life are we sufficiently attentive to those obligations which bind us to the great Preserver of men; but, in the volatile period of youth, it is too generally observed, that the events of life succeed each other without making

any impression on the mind. Be assured, however, that the consideration which I now recommend to you, will not abate the cheerful spirit of juvenile ardour, nor damp the innocent vivacity of reasonable enjoyments ; but will increase your pleasure, sanctify your comforts, and prove the solid foundation of lasting peace. Under the influence of this grateful disposition, you will be encouraged to place your dependence on Almighty Goodness, through all the remaining part of existence ; and to taste the prosperous events of life with additional relish, under the sense of grateful obligation : neither will discontent embitter the mournful hour of adversity, while you confide in the protection of that God who has fed you all your life long ; but, from the affectionate recollection of former indulgence and support, you will derive sufficient reason to “ trust in him at all times.” There are many situations in which a generous mind will be hurt at the necessity of receiving favours from others. When our benefactor is himself injured by the exertions of his kindness, no good heart could accept the benefit without reluctance. If an aged parent sup-

ply the wants of his children, from such a scanty pittance as shall expose his declining years to uneasiness ; and if, while he procure their comfort, he relinquish his own ; though we may admire the sacrifice of paternal affection, the acceptance of the gift would sink the character of filial tenderness in our regard. But in our unbounded obligations to our Creator, the noblest feelings of sensibility have nothing to apprehend. The great Benefactor cannot be injured by his unlimited beneficence : all we have proceeds from his indulgence ; and to enjoy his gifts, is to obey his will. Yet, while you are surrounded on every side by the multitude of his blessings, let not the Giver of them be hidden by the profusion of his own mercies. There is a peculiar satisfaction suited to the mind of each individual, that if we are not wanting to ourselves, will be found in every state ; because the wisdom of the Divine government has allotted to each his proper sphere of action, and will bestow such internal supports on the wretched, as shall compensate for the want of those superfluities which may be denied them. But the most indigent owe their

being, and the continuance of life, to Almighty Goodness; and those who have, as far as relates to outward circumstance, found a fairer lot, are indebted to his liberality, and not to their own skill, for their enjoyments. If the daily provision of food and raiment demand from you the tribute of gratitude, you are equally engaged to be thankful for the blessings of education, and the cultivation of your mental powers. The use and pleasure which result from learning, should be recollected with delight, and acknowledged as derived from Him, "who giveth wisdom liberally, and upbraideth not." What a new and extensive field of enjoyment opens to your imagination from this distinguished advantage! What a fund of satisfaction is in store for your future days, which would be unknown without the aid of instruction! What an agreeable addition is knowledge to all the comforts of prosperity! and in solitude and affliction, is it not our most amusing and consolatory resource? It invigorates the judgment, strengthens the power of reason, and bestows that quick perception, which enables us to discern the right path of conduct. Above all, it renders us more serviceable to

our fellow-creatures, by affording us the means to enlighten the ignorant, and to direct those who stand in need of advice. It will be your own fault, my young friend, if you make not this noble use of the privilege you enjoy.

As Heaven has indulged you with the talent, you will be expected to improve it with gratitude ; and the higher your attainments, the more you will become acquainted with your obligations to the Deity ; since all the researches of knowledge display the wonders of his love to mankind, and manifest the contrivance of infinite wisdom for their advantage. "O that men would therefore praise the Lord for his goodness, and declare the wonders that he doeth for the children of men ! —Let them sacrifice the sacrifices of thanksgiving, and declare his works with rejoicing. —Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the loving kindness of the Lord."

## SUNDAY XXIII.

## ON GRATITUDE TO GOD.

“**BE** glad, then, ye children, and rejoice in the Lord your God !—for ye shall eat in plenty, and be satisfied, and praise the name of the Lord, who hath dealt wonderously with you.” The only way properly to estimate your present comforts, is to consider how much you would lament the loss of them ; and on this principle, reflect what misery would result from the deprivation of those things you are apt to esteem the most inconsiderable.

While you are surrounded with the necessary supplies of daily food, you are entirely inattentive to the means by which it is procured ; nor do you reflect on the dreadful consequence of scarcity. But if the Almighty Power, who presides over the universe, and directs the revolving seasons in their course, should see fit to withhold “ the former or the latter rain,” so as to prevent the earth from yielding her increase, imagine, if you can, the evils that would follow. Those who have never experienced



the cravings of hunger, can form no idea of its horrors : but you may judge, in some degree, of its violence, from the terrible recital of its effect ; and the pathetic description which is given of the famine in Samaria, may represent its misery to a susceptible mind. The sacred historian informs us, that during the reign of Jehoram, the son of Ahab, Benhadad, the king of Syria, went up and besieged Samaria : and as a punishment for the sins of the people, he was suffered to prevail against them, and surrounded the city, so as to prevent the inhabitants from receiving their usual supply of provisions : which occasioned such a severe famine, that those things which would have been despised, and accounted as refuse in the season of plenty, were esteemed as valuable dainties in this calamitous period ; “ for an ass’s head, was sold for fourcore pieces of silver, and the fourth part of a cab of dove’s dung for five pieces of silver.” But even this miserable kind of sustenance was beyond the reach of the poor, who, destitute of riches, had no means to obtain any relief which might mitigate their agonies. They were therefore driven to the

most shocking expedients to preserve life :  
“ And as the king was passing by upon the wall, there cried a woman unto him, saying, Help, my Lord, O King! And he said, If the Lord do not help thee, whence shall I help thee? Out of the barn-floor, or the wine-press?” The stores usually laid up in these repositories had been long exhausted, therefore the unhappy monarch had no means to relieve the necessity of his miserable petitioner; “ And the king said unto her, What aileth thee?” And she answered, “ This woman said unto me, Give thy son, that we may eat him to-day, and we will eat my son to-morrow. So we boiled my son, and did eat him; and I said unto her on the next day, Give thy son, that we may eat him; and she hath hid her son.” This heart-piercing account is frequently perused with indifference, from the want of that attention which its subject demands. “ It was recorded for our admonition,” and represents the most dreadful of all calamities, war and famine, as the consequence of disobedience to God. Yet the same Being still continues to preside over us, at this day, who was the Governor of the people of

*Israel.* From him we receive the blessing of plenty, and every temporal gift as well as moral endowment. His command can at any time "turn a fruitful land into barrenness, for the wickedness of them that dwell therein." Consider, then, my young friend, while you are so happy as to rejoice in abundance, and may "eat bread to the full," that you should partake of the comforts of life with a thankful spirit, and at all times remember the hand "who filleth all things living with plenteousness." Figure to yourself what would be your situation, if you should be deprived of sustenance.

In the melancholy picture above exhibited, and which has but too often been realized, you behold the rage of hunger surmounting every impulse of nature, and every tie of affection. One mother forgetting the force of parental love, and murdering her own son to support her existence; another, though she hid her wretched offspring for his preservation, being perhaps satisfied for that moment by the dreadful banquet which relieved her exhausted frame, who, had her distress been continued, would most likely also have yielded to the same deplorable

necessity. With what transport must these wretched sufferers have hailed the next day's returning plenty, when the prophecy of Elisha was accomplished, and "a measure of fine flour sold for a shekel, and two measures of barley for a shekel, in the gates of Samaria." This prediction appeared so incredible, from the desolate state of the afflicted city, that a "lord on whose hand the king leaned, when it was pronounced, destitute of faith in the Divine promise, and perceiving no probable means to occasion such an event, replied, with indignant contempt, "Behold, if the Lord would make windows in Heaven, might this thing be!" intimating his doubt of the possibility of the fact. He considered (as too many are apt to do) the supply of provisions as depending solely on *natural* causes; but, as an Israelite, he surely might have remembered that the arm of Jehovah had frequently controlled the order of nature for the preservation of his people. And justly did he suffer for his disbelief in the word of infinite truth, by "seeing the abundance with his eyes," without being permitted to eat of it.

The period of such miraculous interposition is now past ; but the production of vegetables, the multiplied increase of grain, and the astonishing formation of animals, continue to indicate the same goodness, and to proclaim the same Almighty power. Remember that his wisdom still guides the various occurrences of life ; and in every social meal recollect that you are under a new obligation to his providence, who ordered such unnumbered causes to work together, to produce that food which sustains you.

“ Give glory now, therefore, to the Lord your God, because he causeth darkness,” by removing your present enjoyments ; and while you have the power of acknowledgment ; “ before your feet stumble on the dark mountains,” and your gratitude is prevented from its exertions “ by the sudden shadow of death.”

The blessings of abundance are not in themselves less valuable for their uninterrupted continuance. If, with a design of serving a fellow-creature, you had engaged in a long series of benevolent actions, would you regard the debt of gratitude as can-

celled by the addition of repeated favours? Yet this is exactly the case with respect to our obligations to the Deity. If he withdraws the bountiful provision which relieves our necessities, we return in penitent supplication to his throne; we ardently implore the renewal of his mercies, and grievously lament the folly which has procured such a severe visitation. But would it not be wiser, and indicate a nobler principle of action, to regard the value of Divine indulgence during the season of its enjoyment, and while we rejoice in his gifts, express the praise which they deserve? Such a conduct would diffuse pleasing satisfaction through every scene of life: it would increase the value of your ordinary comforts, by the remembrance of him who bestowed them; and, as gratitude is one of the purest and most exalted sentiments of the mind, it would enlarge your best affections, contribute to harmonize your temper, and induce you to an imitation of the munificent goodness of that Being, "who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's." Forget not, therefore, in your intercourse with the world,

that God is your preserver, and must at all times be the object of your veneration; for, "from the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same, the Lord's name is to be praised."

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## SUNDAY XXIV.

### ON GRATITUDE TO GOD.

I HOPE, my young reader, that you are convinced of the propriety of that duty which has been recommended in the two preceding lectures; and that your innocent heart is ready to expand with grateful praise, for the continued instances of Almighty goodness.—Those instances are so many and so various, that it is impossible to recount their number, or trace their effects: and so insensibly do they combine together in the promotion of our happiness, that, as I before remarked, we are only conscious of their value (I might almost say of their *possession*) when our blessings are interrupted by some misfortune. When the blood flows in its proper course through the various channels

prescribed for that purpose by our kind Creator, or when you draw, without intermission, the easy breath of health, does it occur to your thoughts that no human power can for a moment continue the circulation of that fluid through your veins? and that, although it is liable to be obstructed by the most trifling accident, yet sickness or death is frequently the consequence of such an interruption? You cannot, it is true, understand the wonderful anatomy of the human frame; but if you were acquainted with its minute and delicate structure, and how many of those small vessels it contains, your mind would be astonished, that this vital current should so regularly flow, and its progress be so seldom stopped. Nor can you imagine what dreadful sufferings are occasioned by those disorders which affect the breath, and the difficulty that would, in such a case, attend your respiration. In short, though every function of the human body (if in its proper state) is performed with such ease, as to require no immediate thought for its exertion; yet the least alteration in any one particular would convince you of the necessity of Divine attention, and the import-



ance of those parts which seem, comparatively, to be less essential.

Perhaps, my young friend, you have been so happy as never to have experienced any acute disorder ; and if such has been your uninterrupted enjoyment, you can form no adequate idea of those anxious wishes for returning ease which agitate the sufferer on the bed of sickness, and in the hour of anguish ; nor can you conceive that degree of grateful remembrance which enlivens the heart during the first transports of restored health. Happy would it be, if the animated impressions were of longer continuance ; but such pious emotions wear off as the blessing becomes established, and are totally forgotten in its continuance. This truth you have experienced, who have felt the languor of weakness, or the assaults of pain ; and few there are so robust, as never to have known the attacks of disease ; since there are some diseases peculiar to the season of youth, and which are sufficiently violent to instruct them in the sensations of pain, and remind them of mortality.

Endeavour, therefore, to strengthen your mind in the exercise of gratitude, by the

recollection of what you *then* felt ; and forget not to renew those sentiments in health, which were so powerful in the time of sickness. For, surely, you can want no conviction, that God is able at this instant to cause your frame to relapse into the same disorder, or to afflict you with one more severe : and therefore, though “ God may not be in all your thoughts,” yet are you continually under his guidance. He guards you with his watchful care when you are sunk into sleeping insensibility. Should you not, therefore, most ardently commend yourself to his protection, before you “ give sleep to your eyes or slumber to your eyelids ?”

Every moment of continued health, or prolonged life, depends on the will of your Creator ; and when you see so many objects of distress suffering around you, remember that it affords no cause for exultation ; but should inspire a spirit of humility, in the consideration that you are liable to the same evils, and that, for the advantage of a better constitution, not unto you, not unto any mortal power, but unto your preserving God should be the praise.

It is sometimes seen, that the vivacity of

youth is apt to be displeased with those who are rendered more serious by a state of continued indisposition : and some there are (with concern do I make the observation) who can treat with contemptuous ridicule, those misfortunes which, adding deformity to inconvenience and pain, make the unhappy objects deserving of peculiar pity. But let them blush for shame at a meanness of conduct, which bespeaks the heart to be at once ungenerous, inhuman, ungrateful, and impious : for surely no person of true generosity would reproach or deride those defects which cannot arise from error or guilt in the afflicted sufferer, and in regard to which they must be entirely passive. Nor is it more consistent with the gentle feelings of humanity, to increase the bitterness of unavoidable affliction, by the sarcastic triumph of boasted superiority. If there is any conduct which may be justly charged with ingratitude, it must be in that unworthy use of divine endowments, which would endeavour to mortify the less happy. To such minds may we direct the emphatical inquiry of the Apostles on another occasion, "What hast thou that thou hast not re-

ceived? and who made thee to differ from another?" And what a disingenuous disposition does it indicate, to be proud of the favours of Providence, and yet despise those whom that *same* Providence has depressed! It adds, therefore, the crime of impiety to the black catalogue we have enumerated; because it is in effect a censure of the Divine Administration, whose wisdom has thought fit so to order the *condition* of his creatures; and who bestows beauty and strength, or allots deformity and weakness, as best suits with the plan of his all-gracious government. Whoever, therefore, can allow themselves thus to ridicule the unhappy, should reflect on the evil consequence, and the guilt which is attendant on such an inconsiderate habit. Let me warn you, my young reader, to consider these important arguments, and neither by your countenance nor example, give a sanction to a behaviour so entirely inconsistent with the spirit of that faith you profess, or of that Master whose name you bear. The blessings of your heavenly Father are to be received with thanksgiving, not as an absolute gift, which can excite any pride, in

the possessor, but as a sacred talent deposited in your hands, to be improved to the valuable purpose of promoting your own happiness, and the pleasure of others. But in the disposition of his mercies, he has reserved to himself the right of resuming them whenever he shall judge it proper ; either to correct your failings, excite a stronger sense of his goodness, or as a trial of your fortitude and resignation. In every state the will of God must determine the duration of your comforts ; but if you wish to deserve their continuance, it must be by an humble and thankful enjoyment of them ; by a constant recollection from whence they proceed ; and by a diligent improvement of every advantage, whether natural or acquired, whether temporal or spiritual, to the increase of benevolent affections towards your fellow creatures, and of sincere piety and gratitude to the Deity.

## SUNDAY XXV.

## ON THE BLESSINGS OF REDEMPTION.

I must again, my young friend, entreat the favour of your candid attention, while I renew the important subject of Gratitude to God. Hitherto we have considered only such obligations as respect the present life ; let us now extend our views to those more important instances of his goodness, which “ has blessed us in heavenly things in *Christ Jesus*,” and which, through his merits and intercession, has opened us a way to salvation and glory.

The happiness or misery of the present state must soon terminate in death ; and therefore good and evil are indiscriminately the portion of the just and unjust ; because we are assured in the gospel of truth, that after the conclusion of this scene of trial there will come a day, in which God will judge the world in righteousness, by him whom he hath appointed : whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, “ in that he hath raised him from the dead.” On the solemn consideration of eternal judgment, the in-

terests of this world seem to be diminished : nor can the concerns of such a precarious situation be worthy our regard, in comparison with that awful state to which we are hastening.

The Almighty Creator has given to all his rational creatures a perfect law for their direction ; and, in the power of conscience-(as we have before observed), has afforded them a certain light, even in the darkest ages. But this divine law has been transgressed by the whole human race ; for which cause, in the words of the Apostle, " God has concluded us all under sin ;" or, as it may be explained, God is now assured, that every one has been guilty of some transgression of this moral law, and therefore deserves the punishment which he denounced on their disobedience. To bring the case home to your heart, let me ask you whether you have not many times been guilty of wilful sin ? And, in the recollection of what has been amiss in your actions, do you not feel ashamed of your crimes, and afraid of the just judgment of your God ? " There is no man that liveth, and sinneth not." The very best of the human race have incurred the

penalty due to transgressors ; and you, my dear reader, must be convinced, that if the Almighty should enter into strict judgment with you, it is not possible that in his sight you could be justified. Could you reply, in the presence of the Great Searcher of hearts, that you had never broken any of his commands ? Have you not, on the contrary, offended him by the violation of truth, or by various instances of pride and anger ; by a disobedient and negligent conduct towards your parents, or by profanation of his sabbath ? In some respect or other, as “ all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God ;” that is, of obedience to his laws, you must be conscious that you justly deserve the punishment of divine displeasure ; for whatever may have been the nature, circumstances, or aggravation of your sins, they have been committed against the prohibition of your Maker ; and “ whosoever,” says *St. James*, “ shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, is guilty of all : for he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill : now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law.” Can any words



more clearly infer, that it matters not in what *particular* you have offended, because *every* sin is displeasing to a Being of infinite righteousness, and without some atonement, must incur the dreadful sentence of future misery. If, therefore, you cannot but allow, that you are highly indebted to the mercy of God for the comforts and supports of this life, what returns of gratitude can equal your obligation for the nobler manifestation of his love, in releasing you from the dominion of sin, and the fear of eternal death ; and, through *Christ*, reconciling you unto himself, not imputing unto you your trespasses ? For if pain and anguish is bitter when you know that it must soon have an end, and if distress can only be supported by the hope of future joy ; reflect on the dreadful consequence of that awful judgment which shall continue the tortures of guilt without intermission, and which affords no comfortable expectation either of relief or conclusion. Though the final sentence that awaits the impenitent sinner may not at present affect your mind as it ought, yet allow me, my dear young friend, with that solemn earnestness which the subject de-

serves, to press the following argument on your consideration. If you can recollect your dissipated thoughts, suppose for a moment that you were summoned by death before the awful tribunal of God; and at this period, while you are reading this page, an account were demanded of all the actions of your past life, can you truly say, that such a solemn event would not fill you with terror? Should you not be afraid of that future and unknown state into which death will admit you? And does not your heart tremble at the idea of that tremendous, though unavoidable hour, when you shall hear the voice of the archangel, and the trump of God, and “when you shall be raised incorruptible,” to “receive the things done in the body, whether they be good or evil?” There would be sufficient cause for this terror, and for the dread of future retribution, even to the most virtuous, but that now “God has sent his son into the world, that all who believe in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” For he has reconciled us to his Father by the sacrifice of himself; and those who comply with the terms of his Gospel, by a *sincere* though im-

*perfect* obedience, shall, through the merits of *Christ*, be accepted. "We may now, therefore, draw near" (to the throne of divine mercy) "with a true heart, in the full assurance of faith; having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed" (in the covenant of baptism) "with pure water." The blessings of this world become more valuable when thus connected with eternity. The favours of God began at the moment of your birth, and will be continued, if it be not your own fault, beyond the boundaries of the grave. The love of your blessed Redeemer has prepared for *you*, and for all his faithful followers, "a mansion in the heavens." "Believe only, and thou shalt be saved." Believe in the promises and threatenings of the Gospel, that "there is no other name under heaven given among men" whereby you can obtain salvation. That your future happiness can only be secured by a *sincere* obedience to *Christ*, and faith in his merits. "That he is willing and able to save to the uttermost" (that is, to save entirely) all who come unto God by him. And he graciously "willeth not that any should perish, but

that all should come to repentance." What encouraging promises are these to invite you to, and confirm you in duty! Will you not, my young friend, be led with earnest contrition to lament your past offences against such a God, and such a Saviour? Has he blessed you with his earthly bounties, and will you not "remember his benefits?" Has he given his only son to die for you, to expiate your sins, to reconcile you to himself; and will you not adore that benefactor, who thus crowneth you with mercy and loving-kindness? Will you disappoint the benevolent design of your suffering Saviour, by a continuance in sin, when he "spared not his life," but submitted himself, for *your sake*, to a violent death upon the cross? "By *his stripes* we are healed:" and does his voluntary humiliation claim no gratitude from the creatures for whom he shed his blood? There is a tribute of acknowledgment which is in your power, and which he will mercifully receive as a thankful return, as the *only acceptable* return for all that he has done and suffered. It is, that you should follow his steps. He has made it the test of your regard, "If you love me, keep my

commandments ;” and your gratitude to God is to be expressed by the same undoubted criterion. “ He that hath my commandments, and *keepeth* them, he it is that loveth me ; and he that loveth *me* shall be loved of my *Father*, and I will love him, and will manifest myself unto him.”

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## SUNDAY XXVI.

### ON TRUST IN GOD.

THE virtues have such a mutual connexion and dependence on each other, that it is almost impossible to possess any good quality in an eminent degree without its correspondent affection. Thus filial tenderness will naturally produce filial obedience ; which is the parent of submission, meekness, and a thousand amiable propensities. In like manner, the vices and passions of the human mind associate, if I may so express it, with each other. Sullenness is disposed to resentment and ill-will, and avarice will effectually harden the heart, and render it selfish, uncharitable, and sus-

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picious. Of such importance is it to cultivate *every* principle of duty, and that "he that thinketh he standeth, should take heed lest he fall." Those who disregard the exertions of Divine Providence for their support; who, like the negligent *Israelites*, in their passage through the wilderness, only "eat and drink, and then rise up to play," are apt to distrust that heavenly protection which they so ill deserve. They perpetually exclaim, with the repining anxiety of the people above-mentioned, "Would to God we had died by the hand of the Lord, in the land of *Egypt*, when we sat by the flesh-pots and when we did eat bread to the full!" They were unmindful of the miraculous supplies of that Almighty hand which had "drawn water out of the stony rock," to allay their thirst, and who, on this occasion, again gratified their lustful appetites, and "fed them with quails from heaven."

May you, my young friend, animated with a constant sense of gratitude to your Omnipotent Preserver, rely with full assurance on his unremitted care; secure, on this sacred anchor of inspiring hope, "that he who spared not his own Son, but deliver-

ed him up for us all, shall with him, also, freely give us all things." As it is not owing to your solicitude that you have been hitherto supported, consider that in every prospect of future life you will be equally dependent on the same Protector. "His hand is not shortened, that it cannot save," although your difficulties should multiply with increasing years. Nor will "his ear be heavy, that it cannot hear" the softest whispers of supplication. Never, therefore, suffer your youthful heart to be depressed with the fear of impending evil; for, "though your father and mother forsake you, yet the Lord will take you up;" and in the same high strain of pious confidence the royal Psalmist proceeds with an encouraging observation, "I have been young, and now I am old, yet saw I never the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread." He does not mean the children of the virtuous are never found in a state of honest poverty; but that they will on no occasion eat the bread of idleness; and that, as "the hand of the diligent maketh rich, so a little that the righteous hath is better than the possessions of many wicked."

The great business of human life is to pursue the path of duty in every varying state, and, through all the changes and chances either of prosperity or adversity, to endeavour by unshaken virtue to secure the favour of God. Your interest, in respect to time and eternity, is equally safe in the guardian care of your Heavenly Father ; his government is extended beyond the limits of the grave ; and though death will shut your eyes to the scenes they are accustomed to contemplate, yet you will awake in regions, which, though *now unknown*, are alike supported by his providence, and protected by his love. Be assured, therefore, that virtue is the "one thing needful," and that all the events of life shall, if that be secured, so work together as to produce your final good. However weak may be your present attainments, there appears to be some time before you for improvement ; but, as the youngest cannot be secure of life, you should not delay a moment the great preparation for eternity. Trust in God, and he will assist you with his grace ; and the more you solicit and improve its influence, the more readily will he dispense it to your necessities. And



though, as a trial of your faith, he may suffer your virtue to be assaulted by temptation, yet still *trust in God*, for he will not lay more upon you than he will enable you to bear; and every exercise of your faith, though at present it may seem painful and distressing, shall increase the glory of your celestial crown. The more difficulties you find in a course of religious duty, the more it should inspire you to rely upon that Almighty arm, which is a strong shield of defence to all who implore its aid.

Let me in conclusion remind you, that the watchful eye of your Saviour and Judge is ever observant of your actions, ever ready to assist and relieve your wants, and his benevolence will cherish those good impressions which rise in your soul, if you endeavour to encourage their wholesome admonitions. In every scene of temptation and danger, consider him as your support, as having the most anxious interest in your conduct, and well acquainted with all the weaknesses of your frame. The Saviour, "who was in all points tempted like as we are," is able to succour them who struggle with the difficulties of a probationary state.

He pities, and will assist those who are engaged in that spiritual warfare, of which he is the triumphant commander. "The Captain of our salvation was made perfect through suffering," and therefore can suit his assistance to all the exigencies of his followers. In the wilderness he was assailed by the grand seducer of men, in many various forms of temptation. All the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them, was the bait proposed to ambition. But his example has left you the proper answer to every irregular inclination: "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve." However inclined by internal suggestions, or solicited by external allurements, you are taught to overcome the attacks of every licentious principle, by the remembrance of your duty to God, and trust in him, that he will never desert you in the attempt to obey his commands.

Set forward then, my young friend, in the path of life, with the generous design of aiming at every thing that is great, manly, and generous; and if your feet should sometimes deviate into error or guilt, be not so far discouraged as to continue in the

practice of evil, but by an immediate repentance, endeavour to obtain reconciliation with your God. "From him cometh every good and perfect gift." You can do nothing entirely of yourself, but all things through *Christ*, who will strengthen you. Be strong, therefore, in the Lord, who will assist your pious purpose of devoting these early days to his service: go forth in the power of his might, determine to surmount the opposition of a vain and wicked world. In that world you are now placed, with the power to decide for yourself, whether you will enlist under the banner of *vice*, or in the defence of *virtue*. Hitherto you have, as it were, been *neuter*, while under the eye of your parents, and guarded by their protection; but the time is approaching, and is in some instances arrived, when you must establish your character with mankind. Your passions gather strength with increasing years; your temptations to evil will multiply from the influence of bad example; and you must now either add to the number of the vicious, by a conformity to their conduct: or, by a firm perseverance in the cause of religion and goodness, become the

delight of your parents, the pride of your country, and the approved servant of your Heavenly Master. The situation in which you are placed is of no importance, since every station has its allotted duties ; to the proper discharge of which a future recompence is promised, through the mercy of God. If your trust in Providence is the affiance which he requires, you will not murmur or repine at any condition he shall see fit to ordain : but will believe that the state assigned you on earth is that which is best suited to promote your present improvement and future felicity. The plans of Infinite Wisdom comprehend every period of your existence, and are connected with causes and events beyond the reach of human penetration. As you advance in life, you will discern, from reflection and experience, that the power of an almighty, though invisible Ruler, can turn the most adverse incidents into occasions of rejoicing, and that the gratification of your most ardent wish, will not bestow happiness, if it be not accompanied with the blessing of Heaven. But if you desire to pass through the vicissitudes of your pilgrimage with

serenity and satisfaction, endeavour, my young friend, to secure an interest in his favour, who can make all things work together for good to them that love him. His friends will evince your worth to the assembled universe, and confer immortal fame when all the distinctions of sublunary ambition are passed away and forgotten. Titles and honours may now be lavished on the undeserving ; but those who can obtain the approbation of the Searcher of hearts, will be proved the successful candidates, for a crown of immortality. Trust, therefore, in God, that as he has certainly placed you in the sphere best adapted to your capacity and power, so he will assist you with every needful supply of his grace, to co-operate with your pious inclinations and exertions in his service. And, as he could not be supposed to create any being but with a design to make it happy, be assured, that it will be through your own neglect and impenitence, if you fail of obtaining that noble reward which remaineth for the people of God.

## SUNDAY XXVII.

## ON THE DELUGE.

THE study of the Holy Scriptures will not only supply you with instruction, and afford a rule of life that will direct you to everlasting happiness, but it contains an inexhaustible fund of knowledge, and the more frequently it is perused the greater beauties you will discern. Many of these beauties are lost for want of attention, and the advantage that might be derived is considerably lessened from a neglect of proper reflection. The important events related in the Bible, as well as the various characters which are there exhibited, were all designed to serve as warnings or encouragement to succeeding ages. But the inconsiderate reader can reap no benefit from them when perused without thought, and regardless of the use intended by the inspired writers. The history of the Deluge is a most awful and tremendous event; and ought to inspire us with a serious conviction of the great danger and guilt of sin, as it was the occa-

sion of such a signal display of God's displeasure, and brought down that exemplary punishment in the Antediluvian World. Yet it is frequently passed over without emotion ; and as an excellent author observes, " We are for the most part apt to regard it in no other view than as a strange event, which happened a long time ago, and in which we have no concern." But this, as he adds, " is certainly a wrong way of thinking. Why is this event so particularly recorded in the Holy Scriptures, and the account of it carefully transmitted to future generations, in books written by Divine inspiration : if not that we should make serious reflections upon it, and endeavour to improve it to good, religious, and moral purposes ?" The general depravity of mankind was the cause of their destruction, and *that* cause will produce the most grievous effects ; for although the Almighty has graciously promised that he will no more destroy all flesh by the waters of a flood, yet he can never want the means of vengeance to punish a sinful people. The inhabitants of Sodom were not spared, when their wickedness was arrived to such a

height as to merit the Divine displeasure ; but his judgments were as effectually signalized by fire and brimstone, which he rained down from Heaven upon them. God is the Supreme Lord of the Universe, and therefore all things and all persons are subject to his disposal. He can reward virtue, or chastise iniquity, by methods that are most unexpected, and out of the course of nature. For the course of nature is nothing but the usual order of his providence, and he can alter and control her operations whenever it suits the purposes of his wisdom so to do. Goodness and piety are the only recommendations to his favour and the means to insure his protection. These qualities were conspicuously eminent in the patriarch Noah, and distinguished him in the sight of God above all the rest of mankind, who were his contemporaries. What a noble evidence is given by the Divine Being himself to the character of this excellent person : “ And the Lord said unto Noah, Come thou and all thy house into the Ark, for thee have I seen righteous before me in these generations.” In the midst of a world which he declared to be corrupt, and



filled with violence, his faithful servant maintained his integrity, and persevered in the worship of the true God, and in obedience to his laws. Consider this example, my young friend, when you are assaulted by temptation, or staggered in your good resolutions by the force of ridicule and contempt. Noah must have experienced every solicitation to vice from his associates, neighbours, and companions; yet he still preserved his firmness in the cause of religion, although he was *singular* in the profession. "Thee only have I seen righteous before me." Undaunted by the idea of difficulty, or the fear of censure, he continued to admonish others of the danger that must follow from the profligacy of their manners. St. Paul styles him "a preacher of righteousness," which shows that he used his endeavours to reform the world, both by precept and example. And is not this a most convincing proof, that the *number* of sinners, or the *fashion* of the times, will not plead our excuse for conforming to *wicked* customs, or following a multitude to do evil? It was the happiness, the glory, and the *safety* of Noah that he dared to be

righteous, when all others had corrupted their way upon the earth. There were, indeed, different degrees of wickedness among the people of that age, and many were no doubt possessed of excellent qualities. They were distinguished by the knowledge and acquirements of those times : and we read that there were among them mighty men, and famous, and men of renown ; yet these acquirements and worldly distinctions could not obtain the favour of Heaven, or shield them from the destruction their *vices* had incurred. This event is so ancient, and so little attended to, that perhaps you may imagine it has not much to do with your present pursuits and prospects ; but, my dear reader, the laws of God are as immutable as himself. He is unchangeable, and so is his approbation of virtue and abhorrence of vice. The difference of time, or variation of manners, cannot alter the constitution of things. He declared the prophet Daniel to be a “man greatly beloved,” at a period many years removed from the time of the deluge : but it was for the same cause as he favoured the patriarch Noah, because he was “a just man, and perfect in his

generation." Singular piety will ever meet its reward : it prepares for us a sanctuary from the worst evils of life. It is an ark to shelter us from the waves of a tempestuous state ; and, like that building to the Antidiluvian Worthy, it may extend its protection to our relations and connexions. If you begin to dedicate your first days to God, and continue to make him the sole object of your trust, you may experience his support in a variety of ways, beyond your most sanguine expectations. He may see fit to bless your mental faculties, since the understanding heart is declared to be his gift : and hence your youthful studies may be attended with a degree of profit, which you would not otherwise experience. When Noah was a child, or when he reached the period of youth, it is most probable that he mixed with his equals in age, without any idea of his future consequence, and that he was to be the only parent of the human race. You must not imagine that virtue will always be attended with such splendid and peculiar distinctions ; but of this you may be confident, that no *one* effort will be lost, and no *eminent* degree of goodness but will

obtain eminent recompence, if not immediately in this world, yet undoubtedly in the next.

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## SUNDAY XXVIII.

### ON ENTHUSIASM.

To enkindle in your hearts the flame of true piety, must be the desire of every friend, who is earnest to promote your everlasting welfare; and the ardour of youthful affections is in general apt to concur with the anxious attention bestowed upon them on this subject. A heart that is innocent and gentle, will be naturally led to feel its obligations to that God, who is the author of all its blessings, and the fountain of its hopes. But as there is some danger to be feared wherever the passions are engaged, it will be needful to forewarn you that there is an excess of zeal, which, as St. Paul informs us, "is not according to knowledge;" is not regulated by meekness, or instructed by reason: and this fervour of mind, resulting from lively spirits, though

it may lead you to make long prayers, and inspire many sudden and violent flashes of repentance and devotion, will not produce a constant and uniform piety of heart and life. You should, therefore, endeavour to watch over yourself, and not entertain a good opinion of your own character, because you are sometimes roused into attention by a sermon remarkably affecting, by a pathetic discourse from your friends, or by the perusal of some serious author; but examine whether you are impressed with a real sense of your duty to God, and to your fellow-creatures; whether you do your utmost on all occasions to govern your temper, to obey your parents, to be kind towards those you are connected with, and to maintain at all times such a remembrance of the presence of your Maker, as will deter you from offending him. These are the genuine fruits of religion, not that mistaken, though well-intended, zeal, with which some young persons are inflamed, and because they are agitated by occasional emotions of passionate warmth in their addresses to God, conclude themselves Christians of eminent attainments. I should be very sorry to damp

the glowing effusions of real goodness in any of my youthful readers; but having known some instances of the mistake above mentioned, I could not forbear to caution them against the spirit of enthusiastic warmth, that might be apt to mislead an honest and well-disposed mind. The impetuous and loud ranting of passionate exclamation, is not the proper method of approaching the throne of grace: God does not attend to our petitions because they are *noisy*, but when they are *sincere*; and the softest whisper of fervent supplication will be heard and approved by him, when the continued addresses of an inattentive or vicious mind shall not meet with regard. We should always remember that God seeth not as man seeth, and that he regards the *motive* as well as the *matter* of our prayers; that if we ask for his grace to enable us to subdue our sins, when we do not resolve to forsake them, however solemn may be the *form* of our petitions, it is no better than an insult to his authority. It is like the Jews who crucified our Saviour, yet crowned him with a robe of pretended majesty, and bowed the knee in scorn, while they hailed him with

the title of "King of the Jews." The path of duty is, in spiritual, as in all other concerns, equally removed from *extremes*. Though on the one hand we are to avoid a cold, insensible, and wandering disposition of mind, we are on the other side warned against an ostentatious or enthusiastic spirit. Our Saviour disapproves the proud address of the self-justifying Pharisee—"God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are:" and yet young persons mislead themselves by the natural tendency of an ardent temper, to mistake the ferment of a heated imagination for the inspirations of the Divine Spirit. Hence they have been led to encourage such fancies as are highly injurious to a right frame of devotion; and, elated with an opinion of their own peculiar sanctity, have, by their conversation, discouraged those of an humble frame, whose timid minds have been alarmed with uneasy apprehensions, because their piety, more rational, though less glaring, has not been attended with any uncommon effects.—But it should be carefully remarked, that in the example of Christ (on all occasions the only perfect pattern for our imitation)

we behold no wild excesses of indiscreet zeal. We hear that his devotion was always *fervent*, but never enthusiastic. No useless expressions, no unmeaning rhapsody is ever found in his intercessions. When he laments the future woes which he foresaw would happen to Jerusalem, although he was so much moved as to weep for her calamities, yet he utters only this short exclamation : "Oh, that thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace ; but now they are hid from thy eyes." In the long prayer which he offered to his Father, in favour of his disciples, when he was going to leave them, recorded by St. John in his 17th chapter, is an earnest and importunate, but calm and solemn manner of address, as if he designed to show his followers such a model of devotion as he intended them to copy. When he was in a situation the most anxious, and his agony was so violent in the garden of Gethsemane, oppressed with a view of all those sufferings that awaited him, the same mildness again prevailed : "Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me : nevertheless, not



my will, but thine be done." So that we may certainly conclude, the proper disposition for us to cultivate is a steady, collected, and humble frame of mind, whenever we offer up our supplications to God. Where the power of enthusiasm prevails, it extends to every part of the character, which it will sometimes render gloomy and unsocial, and at others proud, cruel, and uncharitable : of this kind was its influence over those who persecuted the first Christians, and those who in later ages have shed the blood of Protestant martyrs. Indeed, whatever be the cause in which we are engaged, when once we give up our *reason* to the direction of passion, we shall be in danger of every rashness that such a guide can suggest. We should ever regard the errors of a good heart with pity ; but it is our duty to endeavour, as far as we can, to point out those defects which we compassionate ; and where the design is truly religious and sincere, conviction may be expected to follow, and a speedy reformation must ensue. We must remember to be as devout towards God, and as kind to our fellow-creatures, as we possibly can ; but at the same time

that we seek to practise every other virtue, we should cultivate that candour of disposition which does not censure others who differ in opinion, or may be less conscientious in their behaviour. We are commanded to "let our light shine before men;" and to engage others to virtue by the loveliness of a good example : but we are no way instructed to let the flame of our good deeds burn with so fierce a blaze as to censure the good name of any one, or destroy that charity which is the very bond of perfectness.

As you are too young to determine for yourself in religious opinions, you should implicitly follow the directions of your parents, in a matter of such high importance. Yet, at the same time, you are not to blame the faith of others, who in some respects may have been taught differently. "To his own master every one must stand or fall," says the Apostle. And he most seriously recommends to the Corinthian converts to be careful "lest by any means their liberty should become a stumbling-block to those that are weak." With much propriety may his advice be applied to you, my young reader. "A little knowledge

puffeth up, but charity edifieth." "And if any one is proud and thinks that he knoweth any thing he knoweth nothing, yet, as he ought to know." With increasing years you will discern the folly of many of your proud ideas, and will learn to moderate the impetuosity of passion, which, on whatever subject it may be exerted, must be wrong when it exceeds the bound of prudence and reason. Let your religious principles be founded on the truth of the Gospel of Christ, and partake of the gentle spirit of its Divine Author. His example has taught you to behave with mildness to all who differ in opinion; and I cannot more profitably close the subject of the present Lecture, than by considering the conversation which passed between our blessed Lord, and the woman of Samaria; as it affords a striking lesson of moderation and candour, worthy our constant imitation. After Jesus had been baptized by John the Baptist, and had received his testimony that he was the expected Messiah, he left the city of Judea, in order to avoid the jealousy of the Pharisees (who were offended that his disciples should baptize the people in

the name of Christ), and departed with a design of going to Galilee : and as his way lay through Samaria, he came to a city named Sichem, near to a parcel of ground which Jacob gave to his son Joseph. Now Jacob's well was there ; and Jesus being wearied with his journey, sat down to rest upon it, while his disciples were gone to provide food for his refreshment. During this interval a woman came from the city to draw water, and our Saviour asked her to give him some to drink. She was surprised at his request, as she perceived him to be a Jew, between whose nation and the Samaritans there was great animosity and ill-will, on account of a religious dispute which related to the place of divine worship. The Samaritans had requested Alexander the Great to grant them permission to build a temple on Mount Gerizim, similar to that in Jerusalem, where the same ceremonies of worship were observed, and the same God was invoked ; but each nation was so entirely prejudiced in favour of their own edifice, that it caused such a degree of contention as rendered the people the most inveterate foes to each other ; so that the

woman here observed to our Lord, "How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, who am a woman of Samaria? For the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans." Our Divine Master, ever willing to assist mankind, addressed himself with equal benevolence to this person, although she had herself reminded him of the difference subsisting between his people and hers. But he was willing to instruct her in more liberal sentiments, and to teach the great truths he came to communicate, without any respect to the prejudice of his countrymen. Jesus answered and said unto her, "Whosoever drinketh of this water, shall thirst again; but whosoever shall drink of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." By which he means that the blessings of the Christian Covenant, in which he designed to instruct her, was of more spiritual advantage to the soul than that water would be to the body, which would prevent the return of thirst peculiarly troublesome in so hot a country. The woman soon dis-

covered that the person to whom she was speaking was a prophet, and took the opportunity immediately to ask for his determination of the question, relating to the right place of worship. "Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship?" He who came to teach us all things, discouraged this idle contention, and replies, "Woman, believe me the hour cometh when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. Ye worship ye know not what. We know what we worship, for salvation (or the promised Messiah) is of the Jews. But the hour cometh and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth; for the Father seeketh such to follow him. God is a spirit; and they that worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth." Thus does our blessed Master, in teaching the woman of Samaria, discourage that zeal which adheres to its own opinions, in such a manner as to become uncharitable to others. He considers not himself,—the hated object had long subsisted between the two nations,—but takes every occasion

by his parables, and by his example, to remove their ancient displeasure. At the request of the citizens he entered into Samaria, and continued there two days, making converts to his doctrine; "for many more believed because of his own word; and said unto the woman, Now we believe, not because of thy saying, for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world." Be this, therefore, my young friend, the model of your conduct towards others, nor ever entertain unkind suspicions of your companions in life, because their sentiments are different to your belief. *The true worshippers*, as our Redeemer himself informs you, "must worship the Father in spirit and in truth." By this criterion you may properly examine your own devotion. If you are always recollected, humble, penitent, and sincere, before him who is *a spirit*; a God ever present, and all-knowing; then may you hope for his acceptance through the mediation of Christ. But I must again repeat, no light, fantastic, or impertinent imaginations, are proper to be indulged in your intercourse with the Deity. May you,

as you advance in years, cherish more and more the sacred influence of religious principles ; and while you are even kind to others, of whatever denomination, both in sentiment and behaviour, may you be enlightened by the Almighty with the knowledge of the truth, as it is contained in the Gospel of his Son, and be enabled by his grace to persevere in an unshaken obedience to him here below, till you shall have completed the period allotted for your trial upon earth, and after death be admitted to those regions of perfect information and happiness, where you will no longer "see through a glass darkly;" but will there be illuminated with an increase of wisdom, and not only known in part and uncertainty; for "when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away."



## SUNDAY XXIX.

## ON PUBLIC WORSHIP.

THE subject of our present consideration has been slightly touched upon in the address on Private Prayer; but as much depends on the decorum of outward behaviour, and the recollection of thought during the seasons of public worship, I shall trouble you with some further reflections on that head. The stated periods of religious adoration are the employment of a day immediately devoted to God. You are then, my young friend, called upon by your Maker, to "enter into his gates with thanksgivings, and into his courts with praise; to be thankful unto him, and bless his name." These are the chief purposes of the institution of the Sabbath, and of all other times set apart for religious observation. It is then becoming that our outward garb should be neat and proper, according to our station; but highly inconsistent and absurd that the gaiety of our own habiliments, or the finery of others, should employ our attention. To encourage Christians to assemble together,

and mutually offer up their prayers and praises to the Almighty, our Saviour has graciously declared, that where two or three are gathered together, there will he be in the midst of them. Although he is ever present to make intercession for us, yet here he engages to be in a particular manner attentive to the prayer of his people, and to their supplication. As God was at all times the Governor and Leader of the Israelites, yet he was more immediately ready to accept their offerings, and give his blessing on their petitions, in the ark dedicated to his honour, or the temple that was built to place his name there. Indeed the sacrifices were wholly confined to that hallowed spot, and could not be offered elsewhere without offence. This command laid the Jews under a necessity of going up, at least three times in a year, to Jerusalem; and was a very needful order towards the completion of the Divine plans, in the birth of the Messiah, as it was by this method that his lineage was ascertained, and his parentage known to be of the house of David, because it was here that the birth of every male was enrolled, or recorded. But the Christian worship is

divested of every inconvenient ceremony ; and the prophecies that were to be accomplished by the regulations of the old law, having been entirely fulfilled, we are now left at full liberty to assemble without restraint, for the purposes of religious worship ; and in every congregation where two or more are met together, for the pious performance of that essential duty, there will our Redeemer be in the midst of us. When, therefore, my young reader, you enter that hallowed place, set apart for the solemn offices of devotion, consider that you are admitted in a peculiar manner to an intercourse with the Divinity. Jesus Christ is there as the head of his church, though not in visible glory, yet in uncircumscribed power. He is there as the watchful observer of your most inward thoughts. He watches every motion of your hearts during the various parts of prayer and praise ; and notices whether absence of mind or a regular and fixed attention accompanies each respective exercise. What a degree of solemn awe should this idea occasion ! How should it tend to suppress every insignificant fancy, and every frivolous conceit !

Were the mortal faculties capable of beholding the Saviour under an actual appearance, you might then cry out with St. Peter, when he saw his glorious transfiguration on the mount, "Lord, it is good for us to be here." But, like him, the vision would at present so oppress your feeble power, that you would not understand what to say. Let faith then supply the place of vision, for which you are now unfit. You have the sure word of the promise of Christ, that when you enter his church to join your fellow-creatures in devotion, He will be in the midst of you. He will inspire you with his spirit, if you check not the motions of it by foolish and dissipated thoughts on other subjects. His ministers are ordained to instruct his people, and therefore he will mark the attention with which you listen to their exhortations, and with what temper of mind you receive their precepts. If your intention is to cavil at the expression, the delivery, or the matter of the discourse, He who is in the midst of his people will mark your disrespect, and withhold that blessing needful to prosper the good seed in your hearts. Whereas, on the contrary, an honest mind, sincerely de-

sirous to be taught, and to amend, shall from every ordinance reap some knowledge or advantage, and return edified and improved. Whatever may be the minister by whom you are instructed, it is God who will give you the increase ; and that increase or assisting grace will be in proportion to your own conduct, and the desire of your heart to receive the benefit.

How scandalous is the behaviour of many young persons in their appearance at church ? What levity do they manifest in their entrance and manner ! And will the most candid and extensive charity authorise us to imagine that these eyes, which, like the dove sent out by Noah, wander through every part of the assembly, will not bring some leaf of vanity, or bring home to the heart some objects to attract its attention ? Besides, my young friend, consider that as the rich and poor meet together in the presence of that God who is the Maker of them all, so it behoves you to be more circumspect in your behaviour before them, even if your own devotion was less concerned. Of what use will be the present spirit of reformation, and the endeavours of their superiors to send

the illiterate multitude to church, when they behold so strong a contrast in the demeanour of those who are better instructed? If they are told that quietness, silence, observation, and a recollected manner are the usual signs of true devotion, what must they think of the idle whispering, the obsequious bows, the significant nods, and other expressive gestures, that too frequently pass between persons of higher life during divine service?—The doctrines taught in the *Sunday schools* they must suppose to be totally different from that exhibited in such *Sunday examples*. Let the children of the poor, my dear reader, catch from you the living manners of a Christian; I mean not the formal exterior of a deluded zealot, but the pious, unaffected simplicity of behaviour resulting from true devotion, and a real sense of the presence of God. What sight upon earth can be more solemn or edifying, than to see the different ranks of society united on the Sabbath, and agreed to join in mutual homage before their Great Creator?—the professed object of such a union, that of celebrating his praise, confessing their general transgressions, and solemnly intreating for

his blessing and favour. But these sentiments make no impression on the heart that is entirely occupied by the affairs of the world. The only way to render public worship essentially useful, and to answer the sacred purposes of its institutions, is to come with due preparation of mind, and to dispose yourself, by previous recollection and private prayer, for the solemn offices of the church. This will not require a long portion of time ; and whatever may be the excuses of persons in poorer circumstances, and who have the charge of family cares, it can be no plea for the young and affluent, who have no employment but the decoration of their persons, and therefore have full leisure, and are bound in duty to set their hearts in order.

To this purpose it would be well if you considered the obligation and design of your attendance in the House of God : and a short recollection to this effect might be found not unuseful, as an exercise for your first thoughts :—I am now arrived at the beginning of another sabbath. Many imperfections have attended my devotions in those already past. Life is so uncertain,

and the affairs of it so precarious, that perhaps this may be the last opportunity God may vouchsafe me ; and if I really expected that would be the case, how serious should I be in my behaviour ; how earnest in my petitions for pardon ; how attentive to listen to the truths of the Gospel, and to learn every thing possible concerning a future state. But although I may yet live many years upon earth, the hour of death must certainly arrive, and the day of judgment must as certainly follow. I shall then be called to account for the neglect, or improvement of the opportunity of serving God this day. How shall I answer to him, before whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets can be hid ; if I permit my thoughts to be employed in business, pleasure, or folly, during my attendance on his service ? If others are equally guilty, it will not be an excuse for me. I am convinced it is wrong, and have been better instructed ; and if I set a bad example, I shall be answerable for those who are misled through my fault. I am going to join my fellow-christians in prayer and praise to the invisible, ever-present,



eternal God. All the comforts of my life are owing to his mercy, and all I hope for hereafter must proceed from his goodness. It was by his command that this day was set apart for religious worship. Shall I rebel against his ordinance, and instead of making it a delight to me, and holy and honourable to him, do my own pleasure, and pursue my own schemes in his house, and under his immediate notice? I will entreat him to give me a heart to understand the instructions I may receive. I will pray to him to enlighten my mind, to fix my attention, and to give me a right disposition, that I may not ask amiss.—If a train of things any ways similar to this was encouraged, accompanied with a sincere request to God for his assistance, you would find, my young friend, great advantage resulting from it. It might tend to set aside worldly ideas, to correct the desire of looking after amusing objects, and to bring your mind into that proper and serious frame which is so becoming the duties of public worship. Besides that, it is but reasonable to imagine such a conduct would prepare your heart for the reception of the Divine influence and

blessing. Many superstitious and wrong notions are entertained on the subject of spiritual communications, or the Grace of God. We are not acquainted with the manner in which its operations are performed on the human heart ; but there are numberless ways whereby the Father of spirits may have access to our minds. It is ridiculous to talk of apparitions and appearances ; but it is rational, and consistent with Scripture, to believe that God can and does inspire us with good thoughts ; and the more we give encouragement to these thoughts by attention, reading good books, and prayer to him, the more likely we shall be to make a gradual improvement in piety. Whereas, if we neglect these means, the public institutions of religion will have a less effect, and we shall not be able to derive equal comfort and benefit from them. Surely it is reasonable to suppose, that a person who is quiet and attentive, desirous to be taught, and anxious to approve himself to his Maker, will be more likely to profit, and be made better by his attendance on public worship, than those who gaze around them, and endeavour to make idle observations in the looks and de-

meanor of others, to ridicule the preacher, or else, as is the case with too many, yield themselves up to a shameful drowsiness; and though they would blush to be seen asleep in company with their fellow-creatures, yet repeatedly practise this indecency of behaviour in the house of God. You, my young friend, whose lively spirits are ever active and alert on other occasions, shall it be said that you cannot be *awake* to your first and most important duties? Would you desire to have it supposed that you are insensible or uninstructed in the nature of that assembly into which you are admitted? In this instance much depends on your own endeavours, and it is highly necessary early to check so deplorable a habit. It is an evil custom, that will grow by indulgence, and is so very scandalous, that no method should be neglected that may prevent its continuance. God has in all ages promised his blessing upon a devout attendance on public worship; and if we fail to reap improvement and profit from our obedience, the fault must lie in our own hearts. For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open to their cry. But the face

(or displeasure) of the Lord is against them that do evil. And though it could be supposed possible to fulfil every moral duty without prayer, yet we should not find the necessary relief of our spiritual wants, as God has thought fit to make it a necessary condition that men should ask in order to receive, and seek for what they desire to find. And as we can do nothing without the grace of God, so we cannot obtain this grace without the proper means. We must, indeed, confess that we receive from the Divine bounty many more things than we are able either to ask or think; but this must not hinder us from making our daily supplication, as well as public prayer, for all things needful both for our souls and bodies, and in particular for such mercies as we know to be agreeable both to the will of God and our own circumstances; for herein we glorify God, in that we believe him to be the fountain of all goodness, and that he hears the prayers of those who faithfully call upon him, and will be found of those who diligently seek him. To sum up all, let me recommend you neither to be affected in your gestures, and thus disturb the atten-

tion of others, nor yet heedless and sleepy, so as to lose your own. A pious temper, and the remembrance that you are seen by God, will tend to regulate your behaviour when you visit his temple; and a degree of previous reflection will incline you to observe the caution of the wise man: "Keep thy foot when thou goest into the house of God, and be more ready to hear than to offer the sacrifice of fools, for they consider not that they do evil."

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## SUNDAY XXX.

### ON KEEPING THE SABBATH.

THE Almighty Parent of mankind, ever attentive to provide for the happiness of his rational offspring, has with infinite wisdom commanded their observance of one day in seven, as a period of rest from the labours of life, and a proper and sacred interval, in which to renew the memory of religious truths, and to offer in his temple the solemn tribute of their prayers and acknowledgments. The Sabbath was instituted at the

first creation of man, and the observance of it was enforced, under very severe penalties, by the Mosaic law. There it was ordained "That six days shall work be done, but on the seventh day there shall be to you an holy day, a Sabbath of rest to the Lord; whosoever doeth work therein, shall be put to death." Nay, so strict was the law on this subject, that the usual offices were forbidden; and it was expressly added, "Ye shall kindle no fire throughout your habitations on the Sabbath-day." During the time that the Children of Israel were in the Wilderness, they discovered a man, who, in defiance of this command, ventured to disobey their Almighty Governor, and was found gathering sticks on the Sabbath. It is to be supposed that this was the first offence of the kind that had happened, for we are told by the sacred historian, that when they had detected him in the crime, they immediately brought him before Moses and Aaron, who with the congregation were probably assembled for the purpose of divine worship. Unwilling to punish him with so much rigour, without a certain information of the will of God, they kept him

three days in confinement, "because it was not declared what should be done to him." The Lord then thought proper to inform his people "that the man should surely be put to death, and all the congregation should stone him with stones without the camp." In obedience to this awful injunction, he was led forth to the place destined for his punishment, and the sentence was executed in all its terrors: for "the congregation stoned him with stones, and he died, as the Lord commanded Moses." This may, perhaps, appear a very severe method of atonement for so slight an offence as merely gathering a few sticks. But as the judge, who condemned him to the forfeiture of his life, was the Omniscient Searcher of hearts, we cannot hesitate to pronounce the sentence perfectly consistent with rectitude and justice. It is to be remembered that the people of Israel were under the peculiar protection of Jehovah, and that the Angel of the covenant acted as their special lawgiver and director, and was the civil as well as religious governor of that favoured people. And as the sanctions, by which they were ruled, were chiefly of a

temporal kind, it was absolutely necessary that the rewards, or punishments, should immediately take place. Nor would it have been consistent with the dignity of Infinite Justice to have suffered the violation of his laws with impunity. And this observation should be attended to, whenever we peruse the account of God's dealing with the nation of Israel, as we may otherwise be inclined to think the events which are recorded, are inconsistent with that mercy and goodness which peculiarly distinguish their Divine Leader. Under the milder dispensation of the gospel of Christ, the rigour of temporal punishments has entirely ceased ; but the more awful consideration of a future and everlasting state of retribution concurs to press the necessity of observing the Sabbath, on every serious and considerate mind. The Christian is freed from the troublesome *ceremonies* of the Jewish institution, and the example of his Divine Master has instructed him, that he may be employed in the necessary works of mercy and benevolence, even on the Sabbath-day : but as the Messiah came not to destroy the moral law, but to *fulfil* it, by setting us an example of more



perfect obedience ; so you should consider, my young friend, that you are called to the performance of this duty, by an additional obligation of *gratitude*, as released from every other ordinance of sacrifice and offering, which were necessary to the Jewish nation, as a preservative from idolatry ; but are now all superseded by the more effectual atonement of the death of Christ. The utility of this institution will appear, if you consider the nature of mankind, and the effects which its constant observance is likely to produce, with the happiness which results from the discharge of those religious duties for which the day was set apart by the especial command of God. The Almighty Being, who formed the human heart, must be perfectly acquainted with its propensities and powers, and, in compassion to the weakness, and careful of the interest of his creatures, has united their duty and felicity, by the ordination of the Sabbath. He foresaw that the pursuit of pleasure and the avocation of business would allow no space for the sacred concerns of devotion, and the cultivation of religious knowledge ; and that the worldly-minded would be too

entirely engaged to consider the *rights*, or feelings of the poor and indigent. In mercy therefore he has established this day of general rest, by an immutable law. The impressions of religious sentiments, though at the time they may deeply penetrate the heart, are soon forgotten when we mix in the bustle of the world. We are convinced of the importance of our present state, and the necessity of preparing for eternity, and in this persuasion the heart is apt to form resolutions of future piety and virtue.— Have you not, my dear reader, experienced such effects from your attendance on the public institutions of divine worship? Has not your soul been sometimes elevated above the concerns, and seemed superior to the ignoble passions of the present life? But this solemn calm could not long continue, and you have found the solicitude of present cares regain their influence on your mind. There is a spirit of enthusiasm which is particularly prevalent in youth. But that is not the temper I mean to recommend. Genuine piety, like true goodness, is always rational, calm, and self-collected, in its most fervent addresses. The sense of that

Almighty Being, who is the object of its adoration, will ever regulate the thoughts and keep the expressions within the bounds of respect and reverence. Yet there are some seasons when the mind is raised by the lively representation of its duty, to find the concerns of an eternal state more powerfully interest the soul. The inattention, which but too quickly succeeds this favourable impression, is a proof of the importance of returning Sabbaths, and, profligate as are the manners of the world, it would be still more impious if this sacred day was entirely disregarded.

It has been remarked that a nation becomes gradually more and more depraved, in proportion to its profanation and contempt of this divine institution; and many, whose lives have been sacrificed to public justice, have dated the beginning of their crimes from their neglect of the Sabbath. An awful warning to all, but particularly so to those who are in the bloom of life, not to despise this useful means of improvement, which their Maker has enforced by such solemn warnings and positive precepts. Let those tremble with just apprehension,

who, by a frequent violation, have learnt habitually to neglect the duties of this sacred day. As, however slightly they may regard such an offence, "God is not mocked, for whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap;" and those who wilfully disobey his positive commands, without repentance, must expect to share in the future doom of the impenitent. If the best Christians find themselves in danger from the allurements of the world, and if, as a merciful preservative from vice, and a means to renew their piety, God has graciously appointed one day in seven to be set apart for his service, he will not fail to bless with success those who obediently use the method he has ordained. They may reasonably expect the further supplies of his grace, when they humbly seek him, through Christ, in the manner he has commanded. Let this encourage you to observe the Sabbath with religious reverence, and to employ the intervals, from public worship, in pious reflection on what you have heard, and in prayer to God for his assistance in your earnest endeavours to please him. The instruction which you receive in his church will but little af-

fect your mind, if you do not thus impress it on your memory by after consideration ; but the most happy effects may be expected to follow a regular and conscientious observance of such a laudable practice. The devotions of the Sabbath will prepare you for the duties of the week ensuing, and, by affording leisure for the purpose of self-examination, will enable you to renew with ease the progress you have made in virtue. You will hence be able to guard against such temptations as have before overcome your good resolutions, and, entreating the assistance of divine aid, will become more watchful in future over your temper and conduct. Thus will you expect the returns of this day with increasing delight, and find renewed enjoyment in all your approaches to God ; till, like the royal Psalmist, you esteem a day spent in his courts, better than a thousand passed in any other engagements. Our advancement in religious knowledge, and the practice of virtue, depends greatly on *early* habits of piety and goodness ; and those who make no conscience of following their sports on the Sabbath, while in youth, will find their temptations to disobedience

increase with advancing years. Some, too, will probably be misled by example, and unfortunately there are instances of persons from whom such a conduct would be least expected, who have yielded to the dangerous fashion of the times, and mix in scenes of dissipation on a day which should be sacred to God and religion. It is to be hoped, my young reader, that at least you will not be a personal witness to such a flagrant violation of the Divine law ; and the more powerfully you are ensnared to vice, by the sight of negligence in others, the more solicitous you should be to engage the assistance of heavenly aid, to support you against the dangerous infection. You cannot at this period of your life command a family, or dismiss a household to church ; but you can now, with modesty and humility, retire to your own devotions ; you can abstain from the usual employments of the rest of the week, and from the amusements with which you are then occupied : and who knows how far such a meek and unostentatious piety of behaviour might prove a silent admonition, if you have older friends who have hitherto been thoughtless of their duty in this par-

ticular? Who can tell how far the Divine blessing may assist your endeavours, and give success to your resolutions of obedience, and at least may impress the firm determination on your mind, that, if hereafter you are called into active life, "you and your house will, like Joshua, serve the Lord" on this day. Is one day in seven too much to give up your recreations, when commanded so to do by Him from whom you have received all your time, your life, and every blessing you possess? As the Jews were punished for their violation of the Sabbath, and for neglecting the due observance of the years of Jubilee,\* by seventy years of captivity and misery in a foreign land; so may not He, who is the disposer of health and of sickness, easily prevent you by disease, from the enjoyment of those sports and pastimes which you will not suspend even to obey him? Those who are so happy as to be conducted by their parents to public worship, and are taught the way to spend the intervals of this sacred season in a proper manner,

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\* An account of which you will find recorded in the 25th chapter of Leviticus.

cannot be too thankful for so invaluable a blessing. They will find the conversation of such friends, or an innocent and social walk, and going, if in their power and they are capable, as visitors to Sunday-schools, —agreeable employments for those hours which are not immediately engaged by serious duties ; or endeavouring to edify themselves by gaining such information, on religious or moral subjects, as their elders may be more at leisure, on that day, to communicate. Much real pleasure would be derived from the consideration of God's wisdom and goodness, in his government of the natural world : from a recollection of the incidents of the preceding week, and tracing the accidents that have occurred ; how many times you have escaped from danger, or, if you have suffered, how much worse such injuries might have proved, had not the watchful care of Providence defended you from further evil. Thus would the hours of the Sabbath be profitably employed. It is, perhaps, difficult to find a convenient season for such reflections during the rest of the week ; but God has provided this recess from business as a time immediately suited



to recollection. You may then look forward on the space before you, and stand, as it were, in a middle state, between what is past of life and what is to come. You may, on the return of the seventh day, review the errors of the week elapsed, and form plans and resolutions for that which is to succeed; and, by a regular comparison, will be able to judge with greater ease and certainty, what advancement you have made in your Christian course. But these will perhaps be thought too solemn employments, and some vacant time may remain that you wish agreeably to fill up. Shall I venture then to recommend, especially among a circle of young people, instructive questions\* respecting the principal persons of

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\* The questions I mean are such as these:—Who was Abraham? Where did he live? Who were his contemporaries? And then to examine, on the maps or globe, the exact situation of his residence.—This is merely a hint of what might be found amusing to those who have sufficient instruction in letters and geography. The poorer sort of people ought to avail themselves of the Sabbath, to improve in reading and trying to learn their duty; but it is those who, to their

the Old and New Testament, enlivened with an account from history, sacred and profane, of the remarkable circumstances relating to them that might occur to memory? Those who are capable of doing this, which by habit and custom most would be, who have the advantage of a liberal education, would find it a source of much real instruction and pleasure, and they might be led to search the records of ancient writers, where they found their former knowledge was defective. Visits to the poor, if permitted by your parents, and in their company, might be of general use, among the lower classes of society; and plans to promote their welfare is always a proper work of mercy, suited to this day. However, it must be remarked, that while you are in a dependent state, you must not attempt to act wholly from yourself; you are accountable, my young friend, to those who have the charge of your education, and therefore ought to act in subordination to their authority, in every respect that doth not contradict your

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shame be it spoken, are *better* taught, who usually complain of the Sabbath as being tedious.

duty to God. If, therefore, you are restrained from active efforts by the discretion of those to whose government you owe implicit submission, remember that the devotion and piety of your heart is entirely under your *own* regulation, so far as it relates to your endeavours to keep your thoughts and inclinations in order. The best intentions must have the concurrence of God's grace, to render them effectual ; and therefore you should at all times pray to him, that he will not only put into your heart good desires, but enable you to bring the same to good effect, to his honour and glory, and your happiness and salvation.

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## SUNDAY XXXI.

### ON THE DANGERS OF EVIL COMPANY.

THE desire of rendering ourselves agreeable to our fellow-creatures, is a natural inclination implanted in the human heart, by him who made it, and if properly directed and judiciously restrained, is conducive to general advantage, and productive of ge-

neral happiness. There is no age at which we can be entirely indifferent to praise, or unaffected by censure : but in the season of youth, when every passion is peculiarly ardent, the desire of approbation, if not of fame, cannot fail to operate on the mind. But as the noblest virtues, extended beyond their proper limits, degenerate into the opposite vices ; so the desire of obliging others, and the wish to obtain their good opinion, may, by a too eager pursuit, sink the character into meanness, or ensnare it into guilt. There is one steady principle of conduct, which can alone guide you in safety, through the dangers and temptations of life. The fear of God will secure you, my young friend, amidst the difficulties and calamities that await you. Let the dread of his displeasure warn you from evil, and the hope of his favour encourage you to persevere in well-doing. This admonition cannot be too deeply impressed on your heart. Other motives of conduct may change with your situation, and policy require, in one state, what may afterwards become censurable from an alteration of circumstances. But those who act at all times, “as seeing him who is invisible,” who seek

to please their God, independent of all other considerations, will in every condition be uniform, consistent, upright, and pious. "The fear of the Lord" is called in scripture "the beginning of wisdom," because it is the groundwork, or foundation of virtue. It supposes such a sense of the Divine presence as shall be a preservative from sin, and an incitement to the practice of every moral obligation, or religious duty. Such a fear as is here implied, cannot subsist where any vice is indulged, or any known transgression tolerated. Its salutary apprehensions are a safeguard against the prevalence of ill example, and a restraint from evil, when solitude would hide the meanness of guilt. Be this sacred fear of your Maker a shield to guard you in your intercourse with the world; and, while I endeavour to represent the perils to which you are exposed in society, remember that if you make God your friend by seeking him early, you may with confidence rely on his direction and support. A solicitude to gain the esteem of all with whom you are connected, is the mark of a susceptible and ingenuous mind. No worthy or generous action is to be expected from those who set

the world at defiance, and are careless of the judgment which their actions incur. To be actuated by emulation to excel, merely to gain the praise of man, is an improper and blameable motive; but, "if you seek first the kingdom of God and its righteousness, all other things shall be added unto you." So if your actions, performed in obedience to your Maker, should engage the regard and applause of your fellow-creatures, you may then enjoy their good opinion, and feel a laudable satisfaction from it. Only be careful that you be not vain of this distinction, and that it is not suffered to become your ruling principle. Remember, my young friend, that Christians are not to be men-pleasers, that is, though they are commanded to love one another and to be gentle unto all men, yet they are to perform every action in singleness of heart as unto Christ, as ever having in view that final judgment, when they shall be judged of the Lord. The more gentle and amiable the disposition of young persons, the more they will be exposed to the solicitations and persecution of those associates, who would mislead them from their duty. Let me therefore point out to you, my dear reader, those dangers you

will have to encounter from the ill example of others. At whatever time you leave the company of your parents, whether for the purpose of education, or at a more advanced period of life, you will find yourself beset with numberless temptations from the inconsiderate, the malicious, or the licentious. You will see many whose manners are pleasing, and whose good-humour will engage you in their favour, practise, without reflection, such vices as you have been taught to reprobate. You will shudder at the idea of their guilt, while you love and cherish the offenders. You will be yourself on the brink of a precipice without the least apprehension of danger. This is a most alarming situation, and has proved the destruction of thousands on their entrance into their society. They are unalarmed by temptation when it wears a form so unsuspecting. You will, perhaps, endeavour to reclaim your companions from the errors you disapprove. *You* will suggest the arguments of conscience, duty, and religion. *They* will plead the sanction of custom, example, and pleasure. By degrees your reasoning, continued without effect, will become tedious, and at last occasion disgust. They will be tired

of reprehensions they are resolved to disregard, and will either return your civilities with coolness, or treat you with open contempt. This behaviour will wound your sensibility and mortify your self-love. They will watch the fatal moment of dissatisfaction, and will allure you to renew your intimacy. Then will they plead the cause of folly or guilt, by exhibiting to your imagination all the false pleasures of indulgence. They will persuade you to try, for once, if there is any thing so very alarming in the faults you censure. Perhaps at first you may hesitate ; but he that parleys with vice is sure to be overcome. Remorse will succeed the commission of a crime : but those who have been led to violate a known duty, to oblige others, will palliate a second offence from the same consideration. Alas, my young friend ! you are left to your own guidance in a season that is truly critical ; you are encompassed with dangers, and surrounded by temptations on every side. Your passions urge you to gratify their impetuous inclinations, and your companions excite you to follow their ill example. It is natural to imitate those with whom we associate, and the fear of giving offence has often prevailed on a



complying temper to engage in such actions as their better judgment has disapproved. It requires the force of established principles, and a great degree of fortitude, to withstand the power of intreaties, and the influence of example. Nor have you less to apprehend from those whose society, though not so engaging, is equally dangerous. There are some malicious spirits, who ever in early life delight to ridicule every thing that is amiable or becoming, and who exult in their success when they can make modest virtue seem ashamed. By a disdainful sneer or an invidious laugh, they will endeavour to render you afraid of avowing your sentiments, though to defend them would be your highest praise. Such companions are equally displeasing and unsafe, they overawe the timid, and gain the triumph of victory without the trouble of contention. They affect a superiority of sense by an insolence of conduct, which may often terrify while it offends ; and when they have humbled you by an appearance of disdain, they will try to make you truly contemptible by a denial of your principles, and by engaging in such actions as will render you really despicable.

There are a third sort of companions, with whom you may be sometimes obliged to associate, and these are the openly licentious and profane. In some respects they are not so likely to seduce you as the two former characters that have been described, because there is something in the open appearance of vice, which must shock a pious mind, and will inspire disgust rather than approbation. You will therefore be more upon your guard against their attacks, and not likely to be so immediately misled; but the sight of evil renders it familiar, and by degrees abates the horror which at first it occasions, and the worst cause may be palliated by such plausible, though false arguments, as will confound your judgment, and mislead you into error. So many and various are the temptations that await you in society, that it will be needful to guard against them by every method which caution can suggest, or religion inspire; and, to prevent the danger of surprise, I have endeavoured to point out to your observation the difficulties you are likely to encounter. Yet be not discouraged at the view, but exert yourself with greater dili-

gence to provide against the trials you foresee. Consider, my young friend, that the more powerful you find the inducement to wickedness, the greater will be your glory, and the higher your reward, if you overcome. God requires nothing from you beyond your abilities to perform : He knows exactly the strength of your powers, and will assist you whenever you implore his support, if you do not indolently desert yourself, and neglect the means of grace he affords you. The arguments which offer to regulate your conduct, and to moderate that improper fear of censure, which is so destructive of true goodness, shall engage our future consideration.

END OF VOL. I.

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